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TOMASSO BROSIA

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NEXT ISSUE

The offseason has arrived, and with it comes award season at Baseball America. We'll honor all of our winners, both in a special double-issue and at our Awards Gala at the Winter Meetings in Nashville. We'll also wrap up the Arizona Fall League, rank the top prospects in the National League West, and look ahead to the draft class of 2016.

ASK BA

BY J.J. COOPER

Who's No. 2?

At this time, is Blake Rutherford—the center fielder at Chaminade College Prep in Simi Valley, Calif.—good enough to take at No. 2 over some of the pitchers such as Riley Pint or Jason Groome?

RON DRIESEN

Right now, Rutherford is the only high school position player who appears to be in the discussion to be among the top five to seven picks in the 2016 draft.

In conversations with scouting directors, they agree that the top of this draft class is dominated by pitchers, including Oklahoma righthander Alec Hansen, Florida lefthander A.J. Puk and high school lefthander Jason Groome and righthander Riley Pint.

A pair of college outfielders (Florida's Buddy Reed and Louisville's Corey Ray) and possibly Tennessee second baseman/third baseman Nick Senzel could work into that group as well.

Rutherford, an outfielder, is the best high school position player, at least heading into the winter.

Depending on who you talk to, Rutherford or Reed might fit into that top group, but the consensus is—with plenty of time for evaluations to change—that the pitchers are well ahead of the hitters.

Rutherford has all the tools. He can hit pitches in different parts of the strike zone and hit them a long way, and he can run like there's no tomorrow. If Rutherford moves off center field, his high school coach said, it'll only be because his strong throwing arm would be an asset in right field.

But if the draft were held today, I'd expect to see pitchers taken with at least the first three picks of the draft.

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Vol. 35, No. 25

COVER PHOTO: MIKE JANES / FOUR SEAM IMAGES

FROM THE archives

OCTOBER 1
1985

» IN THIS ISSUE: Jose Canseco wins top prospect honors in the Southern and Pacific Coast leagues.

» ALSO: Barry Bonds ranks third on Carolina League Top 10. "His attitude, which tends to be weak, does not go unnoticed," a manager said.



Let's set the time machine for 1985, when the Royals last won the World Series after sticking with their youth movement (sound familiar?). Here's the report from Tracy Ringolsby, then the Royals beat writer for the Kanas City Star:

The same temptation (to pursue free agents) presented itself to the Royals a year ago, but they resisted and won. And it came up again this year, and again the Royals resisted. They felt they had established the solid foundation and weren't going to undermine it in 1985.

"We have gone through acquiring established veterans, and that was the thing to do. But last year we committed ourselves to a transition to young players and we just felt we needed to stay with it," GM John Schuerholz said. "We felt good about what we had and felt they were going to get better."

It wasn't that the young pitchers with the Royals set the baseball world on fire last year. Bret Saberhagen was 10-11 in 1984. Mark Gubicza was 10-14. And Danny Jackson, with a return trip to the minors thrown in the middle of the season, went 5-8.

But Saberhagen and Jackson responded to the pennant pressures in 1984, helping the Royals win the division, and they, along with Gubicza, combined to give the Royals the nucleus for the most stable starting rotation in the AL in 1985.

"You run the risk of damaging the makeup of your staff (with a major move late in the season)," Schuerholz said.

Stars go back to Jupiter

Top 2015 draft picks return to World Wood Bat roots

BY TEDDY CAHILL

JUPITER, FLA.

Brendan Rodgers was in the opposite dug-out of Ashe Russell and Beau Burrows during the title game of the 2014 World Wood Bat Association World Championship, as Rodgers' Orlando Scorpions faced off against the EvoShield Canes, which featured Russell and Burrows.

A year later, the trio of first-round picks returned to the WWBA World Championship—this time taking in the tournament together as spectators.

Rodgers, Russell and Burrows—selected third, 21st and 22nd overall, respectively, in the 2015 draft—spent the weekend hanging out at the tournament and watching their former teams and coaches compete.

Russell said he was especially happy to see the Canes coaches.

"I can't even put into words how much they helped me out with the draft and college recruiting and everything after I de-committed (from Notre Dame)," said Russell, a 6-foot-4 righthander picked by the Royals. "But just to be around the guys, to be around my friends."

Rodgers, the Rockies' well-rounded short-stop, said the Scorpions became like family during his four years with the organization.

"The coaches are like my parents and the players are like my brothers," he said. "I just love being around them."

In addition to the three 2014 alumni, a few current and former big leaguers were coaching at the tournament.

Red Sox outfielder Mookie Betts served as the third base coach for the Dulin Dodgers, his former travel team. And former all-stars Chet Lemon and Fred McGriff served as coaches in the tournament.

For Burrows, Rodgers and Russell, the memories of playing in the event remain fresh. Russell pitched on opening night of the tournament in front of a large crowd of scouts. Burrows, now part of the Tigers organization, pitched later in the tournament to a sizable crowd of his own.

"Just being in the dugout with the guys was

unbelievable," Russell said. "It's an unbelievable feeling winning a national championship."

There was no Scorpions-Canes rematch in this year's final, however. While the Canes won an unprecedented third straight championship, the Scorpions (playing this year as the Mets Scout Team) lost, 11-3, to the Dallas Patriots Stout in the quarterfinals.

For a few days, Burrows, Rodgers and Russell were able to see old friends, reminisce about their own experiences in high school, and reflect on the challenges of pro ball.

"The difference between the pop off the bat here and the pop in pro ball is a lot different," Russell said.

The three friends enjoyed themselves so much as spectators in Jupiter that they're hoping for another return trip.

"We already made plans to come back next year," Russell said. "It's fun (to) get to see everybody and get to watch baseball."

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Moore's system keeps Royals flush with talent



Jerry Crasnick

Baseball Writer,
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NEW YORK

Nine years, two pennants and one World Series parade into his tenure as Royals general manager, Dayton Moore takes a philosophical stance on moves that failed to pan out. When he reflects on the decision to sign veteran outfielder Jose Guillen to a three-year contract or acquire

Jonathan Sanchez in a trade with the Giants, it's like looking at an old high school graduation photo with a bad haircut.

The formative years are history now that the Royals have raised the caliber of baseball in Kansas City to a level not seen since George Brett was ripping doubles into the gap. Every experience, good and bad, has been an opportunity to learn, improve and bring the Royals closer to their objective of winning a title.

The cardinal sin, in Moore's book, is playing it safe. Moore came up as a scout in the Braves organization and was exposed to some brilliant baseball minds. One of them, long-time Atlanta scouting director Paul Snyder, drafted Tom Glavine, Chipper Jones, David Justice and a slew of other successful big leaguers and is considered one of the all-time greats in his profession.

"I remember asking Paul Snyder one time, driving in the car on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, 'What's the hardest thing for scouts as they continue to grow in this game?'" Moore recalled. "He told me, 'Staying strong in your convictions. Most of the time, you're wrong, but you can't back off. Once you stop making recommendations and being convicted in your judgments, that's when you're going to get fired.'"

As the Royals bask in the afterglow of the franchise's first title since 1985, they're a testament to Moore's imagination and discipline in staying true to his vision. The Royals' \$113 million Opening Day payroll—17th-highest in baseball—was generous by their recent standards. But it took a smorgasbord of bold moves, creative thinking and collaborative

decisions to help Kansas City improve from 69-93 in Moore's first full season in 2006 to a 95-game winner and a title team in 2015.

Bonding As A Team

Of the 25 players on Kansas City's World Series roster, 10 broke into pro ball through the draft or as international free agents. Eric Hosmer, Mike Moustakas and several other players rode the buses together and forged bonds that served them well amid the cauldron of high-pressure baseball in October.

"They came up as a core, and they won championships in Double-A and Triple-A together," manager Ned Yost said. "Their goal from the minute they got here was to win a championship together at the major league level. Having them experience that over the last five or six years, it just gives them a certain comfort level when you get into this type of position. They know each other. They all have the same goals and dreams and the same values. It just makes for a closer team."

If a vehicle was available to upgrade the roster, the Royals made use of it. Rene Francisco, vice president of international operations, contributed to the mix by signing Yordano Ventura, Kelvin Herrera and World Series MVP Salvador Perez out of Latin America. And Moore and his group relied on smart, acquisitions in free agency last offseason.

Edinson Volquez, who led the staff with 200 regular season innings and pitched so nobly after his father's death during the World Series, signed for two years and \$20 million last winter. Kendrys Morales gave the Royals 22 homers, 106 RBIs and an .847 OPS in the first year of a two-year, \$17 million deal; and Alex Rios rebounded from a forgettable regular season to contribute in October.

Moore's offseason bargain shopping was effective, too. Reliever Ryan Madson and starter Chris Young made substantial contributions in exchange for sub-\$1 million base salaries, and Kris Medlen could be a big piece of the starting rotation in 2016.

Some Killer Trades

Finally, the Royals benefited from several productive trades. In December 2010, Moore sent Zack Greinke to the Brewers in a six-



Eric Hosmer is among the many Royals who have come up the through the farm system

player deal that brought outfielder Lorenzo Cain and shortstop Alcides Escobar to Kansas City. That's two linchpin acquisitions at premium, up-the-middle positions with a single phone call. In hindsight, Moore also hit paydirt with the highly debated, 2012 trade that sent Wil Myers to the Rays for James Shields and Wade Davis. Shields won 27 games and threw 455 innings in two seasons as a Royal, and Davis has emerged as one of baseball's most dominant closers.

With the Royals in go-for-it mode at the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline this summer, the Glass family gave Moore the latitude to tap the farm system for two veteran rentals who ultimately played important roles. Ben Zobrist solidified Kansas City's batting order in the No. 2 spot, and Johnny Cueto contributed two monster starts in the postseason even if his regular season was below expectations.

The aforementioned transactions speak to Moore's reliance on scouts and thirst for information regardless of the source. While the Royals aren't hardcore number crunchers, Moore never makes a personnel decision without seeking input from Mike Groopman and the team's analytics department.

Opinions Are Welcome

It's all part of Moore's desire to cultivate an inclusive environment in which duties are freely delegated and voices are readily heard. Years ago, Snyder counseled him on the importance of surrounding himself with "gray-haired men"—seasoned baseball people who could bring perspective. Art Stewart, Donnie Williams, Bill Fischer and Mike Arbuckle all fit that description.

"No one feels intimidated if you have a different opinion from the group," Arbuckle said. "I've seen places where if you feel different from the GM and the group, you worry about your job. Dayton wants input, and he'll filter all the different opinions and make his decision."

Moore grew up in an Atlanta organization where it was a badge of honor for scouts to pound the table if they felt strongly about a player. While cooperation in a front office is nice, it's even better when infused with just the right amount of creative tension.

"As long as everybody's heart is in the right place and we're all doing what's best for the Kansas City Royals, we have an opportunity to be successful," Moore said. "It's not analytics vs. traditional scouting. It's about baseball, and we're just trying to get it right." After three fallow decades for baseball in Kansas City, Moore's vision became a reality on an early November night. The road led from the Pennsylvania Turnpike to a victory celebration in Kansas City's Union Station. And it was worth every mile

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Phils hire Klentak as GM; Marlins, Jennings split

BY VINCE LARA-CINISOMO

Andy MacPhail, the incoming president of the Phillies, hired Matt Klentak to be the Orioles' director of baseball operations in 2008 when he was with Baltimore.

But MacPhail did not allow sentimentality to encroach on making a franchise-altering decision in picking a new general manager.

"(MacPhail's) process was comprehensive, it was rigorous, it was objective and it was thorough," said Phillies ownership partner John Middleton, who was part of the interview team. "And because (he) did all those things well, (MacPhail) wound up with a great result in hiring Matt."

Klentak, 36, replaces Ruben Amaro Jr., who was fired after seven years. Amaro has taken a career pivot, becoming first-base coach of the Red Sox. Klentak, who played shortstop at Dartmouth and graduated from the school in 2002, has also worked for the Rockies and Major League Baseball. MacPhail batted questions about his inexperience.

"Nobody is 100 percent ready for this job when you get it," MacPhail said. "You've got to sit in that seat, make those decisions and live with them and deal with the consequences. But as far as a resume is concerned, he's done everything that you need to do to get that opportunity."

Klentak also interviewed for the Angels' general manager job, which went to longtime Yankees executive Billy Eppler.

Jennings Departs Miami

Shortly after officially hiring Don Mattingly as their new manager, the Marlins announced that GM Dan Jennings—who moved from the front office to the field when the Marlins fired manager Mike Redmond in May—would not return to the organization in any capacity. Jennings had been part of the Marlins' front office since 2002 and had been GM since 2007.

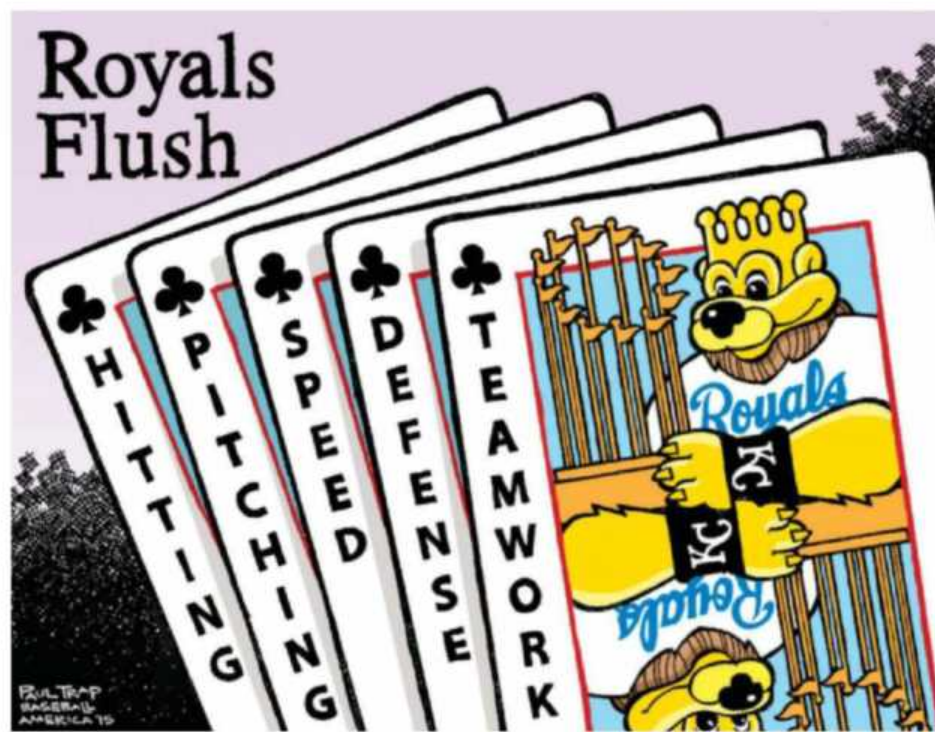
"This is the continuation of the restructuring of our baseball operations department," team president David Samson said in a statement. "We look forward to moving in a unified direction to reach our goal of becoming a championship-caliber ballclub that our fans richly deserve."

It had been widely expected that Jennings would resume his old duties following the season, and his contract runs through 2018.

But it has been a season of change in the Marlins' front office. Scouting director Stan Meek got a contract extension, but farm director Marty Scott was reassigned and the team brought back Marc DelPiano from the Pirates to fill that role. Michael Hill, the president of baseball operations, will assume GM duties as well.

PERSPECTIVE | Paul Trap

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Anthopoulos passes on extension with Jays

BY VINCE LARA-CINISOMO

Perhaps it was the departure of a trusted mentor in Paul Beeston. Or perhaps it was the hiring of former Indians executive Mark Shapiro to succeed Beeston.

Whatever the reasoning, Alex Anthopoulos' decision not to return as general manager of the Blue Jays left Toronto's management and fans stunned.

Anthopoulos had been GM of the Jays since the end of the 2009 season, when he replaced J.P. Ricciardi. Toronto went 489-483 in that time, and finished 93-69 this season to win the American League East for the first time in 22 years.

Anthopoulos was credited for pulling off trades for all-star third baseman Josh Donaldson before the season as well as deadline deals for Troy Tulowitzki and David Price that resulted in Toronto blowing past the Yankees to win the division.

However, Shapiro criticized the deals, according to multiple reports, particularly the in-season trades because they left the Blue Jays system bereft of upper-minors talent. The organization gave up 12 pitching prospects—including No. 1 prospect Daniel Norris—in those deals.

Shapiro, the former Indians GM and team

president, reportedly also had said that he planned to have a more active role in personnel decisions.

The Jays offered Anthopoulos a five-year contract extension, according to Blue Jays' chairman Edward Rogers, as well as the opportunity to opt out after one year if he felt the working arrangement with Shapiro was untenable.

Ultimately, Anthopoulos decided he would not remain in Toronto, despite calling it a dream job for a native Canadian.

In a conference call the day the decision was announced, Anthopoulos was circumspect, saying only that he didn't sense "the right fit" with the new organization leadership.

Rogers said the organization tried to assure Anthopoulos that his duties wouldn't change.

"We really wanted Alex to lead the Jays into the future and tried very hard to do that," Rogers said. "His job had not changed at all. His direct manager will change, but his breadth of scope and responsibility had not changed. We had full confidence in him."

Players the Jays signed or drafted during Anthopoulos' tenure include Marcus Stroman, Aaron Sanchez, Roberto Osuna, Kevin Pillar and Dalton Pompey, as well as traded players Noah Syndergaard, Anthony DeSclafani and Norris.

IN SHORT | PEPPER

WORLD SERIES RATINGS A WINNER FOR FOX

The Royals' World Series triumph over the Mets was a hit for Fox.

While the Game Five clincher grabbed an 11.7 rating on Nov. 1—down 23 percent from Game Seven in 2014 when the Giants defeated the Royals—it was the best Game Five rating since 2009, when the Yankees and Phillies squared off.

For the full five games, the 2015 World Series averaged a 10.1 rating/17 share in metered market results. That's up 26 percent over 2014's five-game average and 11 percent over the seven games of last year's series.

In Kansas City, an estimated 90 percent of TV-owning households tuned into the game's climax at 11:30 p.m. Central time, according to the Hollywood Reporter.

MLB ANNOUNCES JR. HOME RUN DERBY

Major League Baseball will roll out a new program in 2016 called the Jr. Home Run Derby.

Local competitions, for kids ages 14 and under, will run in various cities, followed by regional finals in several key markets.

The winners of the regional tournaments will take part in the finals during all-star week at the major league ballpark that will play host to the All-Star Game. That will be Petco Park in San Diego in 2016.

Overall winners will be recognized at the MLB Home Run Derby. Parents and kids can register now at PlayBall.org.

PHILS' TOP PROSPECT HURT IN FALL LEAGUE

Phillies shortstop **J.P. Crawford**, the top prospect in the system and among the best in the game, tore the ulnar collateral ligament in his left thumb and was to be in a splint for three to four weeks. Crawford was in the Arizona Fall League with the Glendale Desert Dogs before being injured. He was hitting .150/.150/.227 through 20 at-bats in the AFL. He was replaced on the roster by infielder **Drew Stankiewicz**, the Phillies' 11th-round draft choice in 2014 out of Arizona State.

GOLLOWAY NOT DONE

Former Auburn coach **Sonny Galloway** announced plans to coach again during a press conference in October, while also denying the 11 allegations that led to his firing in September—including allowing injured pitchers to throw bullpen sessions. Galloway said he will be cleared once the facts surrounding his firing are made public.

Galloway's attorney, **John Saxon**, had harsh words for Galloway's former employer.

"I think the Auburn athletic department is rotten," he said.



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Mets have one good Knight



Peter Gammons

Columnist,
MLB Network

NEW YORK

In the end, Matt Harvey was The Guy.

The Friday before his World Series Game Five start, Harvey admitted he was “frustrated” by the lack of propulsion on his fast-ball that had produced just two swings-and-misses in his previous start against Kansas City.

But when it came to the start that could postpone winter—the start the Mets could not lose—Harvey walked to the mound like Justin Verlander, John Smoltz or Pedro Martinez, beyond doubt and above frustration caused by the innings flap started by his agent, Scott Boras.

When he finished the eighth inning in a blaze and with a 2-0 lead, it was not his arm or his innings that did in the Mets—it was that Matt Harvey was the guy, the man who wanted to do it himself, the way John Smoltz always said he refused to let his wife drive.

Harvey talked Dan Warthen and Terry Collins into letting him pitch the ninth because, in the end, his human flaw was his heart and his soul. And for all those who questioned him and those who suggest he should be traded, Matt Harvey took to the biggest stage of his career and showed he is that guy who wants the elimination game, the guy whose heart outgrew the rationale of his mind.

Bobby Cox took Hall of Famer Tom Glavine out for the ninth inning of the 1995 clincher with a one-hitter. Bruce Bochy took Madison Bumgarner out after seven innings and 86 pitches with a 2-0 lead in the 2012 World Series. Grady Little couldn't make up his mind after seven hard innings in Game Seven of the 2003 ALCS, sent Pedro Martinez back out and lost his job. John McNamara took out Roger Clemens in 1986, and we all know how that worked out.

Terry Collins should have gone to Jeurys Familia, sure. But Harvey was the guy who, dead tired, came out and reached for a level that, two days earlier, he wasn't sure he could reach. He could have taken a seat in the dug-out to watch the game wind down, he could have had a message delivered in his brain that told him “you'll remember this in 2019 when you hit the free agent market,” but the elite athletes never hear those practical voices. They become Luis Tiant and Bob Gibson and Sandy Koufax and other October heroes.

And as the Mets prepare for Octobers in 2016, 2017, and 2018, they know they want what Matt Harvey wants: the ball in his hand, the keys to the Maserati in his palm. Then everyone can worry about free agency and where he goes in 2019.

When you're in New York, it's about guys who sizzle for the New York moments, and when you're the Mets, you want three years of New York moments across the river from Yankee Stadium. And with Harvey, Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard, Steven Matz, Zack Wheeler and Familia, this can be a long stretch of New York Mets moments.

So stop trying to find Harvey's mute button, or trying to tone down “60 feet, 6 inch” Syndergaard. Just give them the damned ball and ride with the wind.

Free To Go

So the Mets will lose Yoenis Cespedes and they could lose Daniel Murphy.

But with this pitching, the depth of their farm system and the fiscal benefits from getting to the World Series, they can stay in contention for years to come. And two years from now, the flow from their system of positional players—which began with 2014 first-rounder Michael Conforto—will begin producing more benefits.

“People talk about the different routes taken by the Cubs and Mets, position players versus pitching,” Mets farm director Paul DePodesta said, “but it really wasn't entirely by design. The Cubs had high draft picks for a number of years, centered on college bats that are so hard to find, and didn't miss. They did a great job.”

“We were picking in the middle to late first round, and concentrated on high school position players and pitching.”

To his credit, general manager Sandy Alderson and his team also did a remarkable job getting Syndergaard and Wheeler in trades (Matz, Harvey and deGrom were selected under Alderson's predecessor, Omar Minaya).

Scouts covering the Arizona Fall League consider first baseman Dominic Smith, the 2013 first-round pick who was the MVP in the Florida State League, one of the three best prospects in the league. Fellow high



Eight shutout innings gave Matt Harvey the confidence to talk his way into the ninth

school first-rounders Brandon Nimmo, an outfielder, and Gavin Cecchini, a shortstop, could work their ways to Queens by the end of next season. And 19-year old shortstop Amed Rosario is considered one of the premier defensive middle infield prospects in the game.

So for all the controversy surrounding The Dark Knight, he is a Met for three more years at way below market prices.

The Mets hope he'll strut to the mound in October in baseball's biggest market and give them a chance to win—again.

Royals find success worth wait



Tracy Ringolsby

Columnist,
MLB.com

NEW YORK

Thirty years ago, it took the Kansas City Royals the full seven games to claim a World Series championship, and in the process, they had to overcome 3-1 deficits in both the American League Championship Series against the Blue Jays and in the World Series against the Cardinals.

The current version of the Royals ended the franchise's 30-year championship drought against the Mets, and while the ledger will show they did it in five games, what was apparent to Royals players of the past is that this year's club

also showed an amazing resiliency.

The Royals didn't face six elimination games en route to winning their championship, but in the World Series alone, they had to rally to overcome deficits in the ninth inning of Game One and Game Five, as well as in the eighth inning of Game Four.

“I think this team is more talented than (1985), but it is similar in its refusal to give up, its belief in each other and ability to handle the challenges,” former Royals pitcher Mark Gubicza said. “They could have easily been behind three-games-to-two, but instead they are celebrating.”

The Royals earned it. A preseason pick to finish fourth and an underdog throughout the postseason despite winning an AL-best 95 games in the regular season, Kansas City disposed of the Astros in the AL Division Series—but only after being down to their final six outs in Game Four—and then the Blue Jays in the ALCS before taking on the Mets in the World Series.

Unlike those 1985 Royals, who lost back-to-back home games to the Cardinals to open the World Series, and then split the first two games in St. Louis before running off three consecutive victories, these Royals faced elimination in only the Division Series before rallying for back-to-back victories

in the best-of-seven series.

Kansas City won the first two games against Toronto, and then the first two against New York.

The Royals showed a refusal to quit, becoming the first team to come from behind for eight victories in a postseason. And in three of their four World Series victories, they rallied against Mets closer Jeurys Familia, who blew a World Series-record three saves.

“A lot of it comes from having a tight-knit bunch, and that's what was similar between us and the current Royals,” said Bret Saberhagen, the 1985 World Series MVP, when he pitched two complete-game victories, including Game Seven. “It's not 25 guys in 25 cabs. It's guys who like each other. The core came up together through the system.”

“And what matters is what *we* do, not what *I* do.”

Hero In A Pinch

It was the Royals' bench erupting as one when Christian Colon, in his only at-bat of the postseason, delivered the go-ahead single as a pinch-hitter in the 12th, sparking a five-run rally that lifted Kansas City to a 7-2 victory.

“I think it's a chemistry that exists in the clubhouse now, like it did with us,” said John Wathan, a catcher on the 1985 team who later managed the Royals and is now a special assistant to general manager Dayton Moore. “There's no real superstar on this team, but there are a lot of very good baseball players.”

And now the baseball world is well aware of these Royals, who despite taking the Giants to seven games in the World Series a year ago, were projected by many to miss the postseason altogether this year. They were never a favorite to win any postseason game they played.

However, the Royals won 11 of the 16 games they did play, much like the team that was never favored to win a game in the 1985 postseason knocked off both the Blue Jays and Cardinals despite having to win three elimination games against both.

“We were the least likely team to win anything on paper,”



Royals fans were overjoyed by their first crown in 30 years

former catcher Jim Sundberg said, “but our pitching staff hit a high gear the second week of September, and it never slowed down.”

“I can remember the feeling before the fifth game of (the 1985) World Series. It was very quiet in the clubhouse. There was a sense of focus. I thought, ‘So this is what it feels like to be on the brink of elimination.’”

This year's Royals never came to the brink of elimination against the Mets. But they faced their late-game challenges, and they met them without flinching.

Now they can enjoy the reward for their efforts, and the adulation of a dynamic fan base in Kansas City.

“It was cool to see,” Gubicza said. “After a while, you start to forget little things, but watching this team brought back so many memories. The '85 team is one the Kansas City fans embraced for a long time. Now we can hand it over to the new team. They earned it.”

And they did it the hard way, much like the '85 Royals, battling from behind to come out on top.

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NL Central becomes baseball's best



John Manuel

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The National League Central didn't produce the World Series winner, but it was baseball's best division in 2015.

It wasn't just notable for three strong teams in the Cardinals (100 wins), Pirates (98) and Cubs (97). It was notable for how young those teams were, and indeed how young the entire division was. The Cubs, with a well documented foursome of

rookie regulars who helped them win a playoff series for just the second time in 70 years, had the second-youngest lineup in the NL, just a shade older than the Diamondbacks.

The Cardinals were the first team in four years to win 100 games and had the best team ERA (2.94) in the game despite having only one starter over the age of 28.

And the 98-win Pirates have a strong, young foundation build on former MVP Andrew McCutchen (a ripe old 29), fellow outfielders Starling Marte (27) and Gregory Polanco (24) and ace righty Gerrit Cole (25).

In other words, none of those three teams shows signs of sliding anytime soon.

That's where this issue comes in, with NL Central Top 10s. Last year, you could see in

this issue that the Cubs were coming on fast, and their top four prospects all graduated to the majors this season. No NL Central team has that kind of close-to-the-majors talent this year, though—no team in the majors does.

The Cardinals have graduated so much talent to the majors lately that their system lacks its usual impact talent, particularly among hitters who are in full-season ball. The system would look much stronger, for example, if Stephen Piscotty were still prospect-eligible. But no one in the division has a prospect like Alex Reyes, who has a case as the minors' best pitching prospect. Just what St. Louis' pitching staff needs—another power arm.

The Pirates have concerns to address in their pitching staff after Cole, but top prospect Tyler Glasnow, a 6-foot-7 righthander, finished 2015 in Triple-A. While he's unpolished, he also is difficult for hitters to square up, and the Pirates also have hopes for righties Jameson Taillon and Nick Kingham as they return from Tommy John surgery.

The Cubs lack upper-level pitching prospects. Pierce Johnson hasn't stayed healthy, and Corey Black and Carl Edwards Jr. have wound up as relievers. If the Cubs are going to end their pennant (1945) and World Series (1908) droughts, the pitching improvements likely will have to come from outside the system, either via free agency or by trading minor league assets such as Gleyber Torres, Willson Contreras and Billy McKinney.

Bottom To The Top?

The Reds have their own concerns as they rebuild; they set a record for consecutive games started by rookie pitchers, and their farm system remains remarkably pitcher-heavy. They likely still have pieces to tear down, from Aroldis Chapman to Todd Frazier. Joey Votto, with his contract guaranteeing him more than \$190 million for the next eight seasons, will be joined by plenty more low-cost teammates.

The most upwardly mobile organization in the division is also the one with the newest general manager. The Brewers and GM David Stearns have building blocks in Milwaukee if they choose to contend short term in Ryan Braun, Jonathan Lucroy and Jimmy Nelson, but that core is older and needs more support pieces than the cores in Chicago, Pittsburgh and St. Louis.

Stearns inherits a strong farm system, the best current system in the division for me. Oswaldo Arcia, who entered 2015 ranked No. 94 on BA's Top 100 Prospects, took a big step forward, showing whip in his bat and thriving in Double-A while also becoming a full-time shortstop. In trading Carlos Gomez to Houston, Milwaukee picked up big league outfielder Domingo Santana and athletic prospect Brett Phillips, among others.

And for once, the Brewers have pitching depth. Righthander Jorge Lopez took off as Arcia's teammate at Biloxi, is the best of the



Joey Votto will likely have a totally new crew around him when the Reds contend again

crew, but the Brewers have multiple options.

It won't be easy for the Brewers to break through. The Cardinals and Cubs are well-run and deep pocketed. The Pirates have made three straight playoff trips despite a small market and have unlocked a passionate fan base.

And the Reds . . . well they'll always have Votto. Unfortunately for him, they have the hardest rebuild ahead of them, as they compete in a stacked division that should get better before it gets worse.

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Stearns cites sustainability as key to new plan

BY TOM HAUDRICOURT

MILWAUKEE

David Stearns knows rebuilding. As assistant general manager of the Astros for the past three seasons, Stearns was the right-hand man of GM Jeff Luhnow as the two led a rebuilding plan that carried Houston out of the depths of three consecutive 100-loss seasons to a wild-card playoff berth in 2015, perhaps a bit ahead of schedule.

Accordingly, it made perfect sense when the Brewers hired Stearns at the tender age of 30 to be their GM and lead yet another rebuilding process after the club bottomed out this year. It was a season of change for the 68-94 Brewers, who replaced manager Ron Roenicke after only one month with front-office assistant Craig Counsell, traded away a half-dozen veterans in exchange for a slew of prospects and tabbed Stearns to replace GM Doug Melvin, who announced in August he would step aside into an advisory role.

In his introductory press conference, Stearns presented his mantra, one he said folks would hear over and over when asking about his strategy for returning the Brewers to playoff contention.

"The philosophy of building a sustainable playoff team is not a secret," he said. "You need to acquire, develop and keep controllable, young talent."

"If you look at the sustainably competitive teams throughout the industry, regardless of market size and city, that's what they have to do."

Fortunately for Stearns, the Brewers made real progress in that direction before he was hired. By virtue of the team's last two drafts, in particular their 2015 class, as well as prospects acquired in July trades, the Brewers' farm system was transformed in relatively short order from one lacking blue-chip players to one brimming with them.

The biggest haul came in a deal with Houston—ironically, Stearns was involved at the other end—when the Brewers sent center fielder Carlos Gomez and righthander Mike Fiers to the Astros for outfielders Domingo Santana and Brett Phillips as well as lefthander Josh Hader and righty Adrian Houser.

Milwaukee called up Santana shortly afterward, and he threw his hat into the ring for 2016 by hitting six home runs in 38 games.



Domingo Santana, one of four players acquired from the Astros in a trade deadline deal for Carlos Gomez, hit six home runs for the Brewers after his callup

Ranked as the Astros' No.1 prospect at midseason, Phillips figures to be the eventual replacement for Gomez in center field and possible leadoff hitter with strong offensive potential. Houser got his feet wet in the majors as a September callup, and Hader was throwing in the high 90s at the outset of his assignment to the Arizona Fall League.

Righthander Zach Davies, one of the Orioles' top prospects, was acquired in a deal for outfielder Gerardo Parra. Though slightly built and not a hard-thrower, Davies showed in six starts for the Brewers that his stuff could play in the majors. He finished with a string of 15 consecutive scoreless innings.

The Brewers might have found a diamond in the rough when they traded third baseman

Aramis Ramirez to the Pirates for righthander Yhonathan Barrios, a converted infielder who was not highly regarded but showed up in Milwaukee in September throwing in the high 90s with impressive control. One could envision him as a high-leverage reliever one day in the big leagues.

The Brewers had good reason to be excited about their 2015 draft, in particular first-rounder Trent Clark and fourth-rounder Demi Orimoloye, a pair of outfielders who made impressive debuts in the Rookie-level Arizona League. Second-round righty Cody Ponce, from NCAA Division II Cal Poly Pomona, also opened eyes with his big arm, and lefty Nathan Kirby, the 40th overall pick out of Virginia, is expected to be a contributor

once he recovers from Tommy John surgery that will nix his 2016 season.

Sprinkle in some highly-rated prospects already in the system, such as shortstop Gilbert Lara, third baseman Jake Gatewood, outfielders Tyrone Taylor, Clint Coulter, Monte Harrison and Michael Reed; lefthander Kodi Medeiros and righthanders Jorge Lopez, Devin Williams, Marcos Diplan and Tyler Wagner, and it's easy to see that Stearns already has many building blocks in place with which to begin restocking the roster.

That's a good thing for a small-market club reticent to push its payroll over \$100 million or be major players on the free agent market.

"You can't build a team through free agency," Stearns said. "Even the biggest-market



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teams in baseball can't do that. The trick is to develop a process and a system that allows you to constantly regenerate that pipeline, even as you're competitive at the major league level."

Asked if he might continue the trend started in July of trading major leaguers for prospects to further fuel the rebuilding process, Stearns said: "We're going to explore everything. I have an obligation to the organization to explore every avenue to build a foundation here. That doesn't necessarily mean it's going to happen, but I won't say it absolutely can't happen."

More often than not when a new GM takes over, he puts a different manager in place. Counsell, however, signed a three-year deal to take over the team on the field after serving as a special assistant to Melvin for three seasons.

Stearns gave no indication whatsoever that he felt compromised by having a manager already in place.

"Craig is a really impressive guy," Stearns said. "He has a tremendous reputation in the industry. It needs to be a true partnership where there is real trust on both ends. Craig and I are on the way to creating that kind of partnership and relationship. Rather than a hindrance, that was an attractive part of the job."

A graduate of Harvard, Stearns fit the profile of so many GM hires in recent years. He's an Ivy Leaguer well-versed in the growing field of baseball analytics as well as the other, more traditional areas of baseball operations, including scouting, player development and evaluation, player transactions and contract negotiations.

Just to make sure he had a well-rounded operation, Stearns hired well-regarded Rays director of player personnel Matt Arnold to be his assistant GM, replacing Melvin's assistant Gord Ash. Stearns noted that Arnold, 36, had a strong background in pro scouting and felt that skill set complemented his own to give balance to the Brewers' baseball operation.

"We're going to run the baseball operations group as a partnership," said Stearns, who was in search of a new farm director after dismissing Reid Nichols. "Matt is going to have input and impact across the entirety of the baseball operations spectrum."

"We're going to make sure we have multiple viewpoints across everything we do here. Matt's voice and opinion is going to be heavily weighted across the board."

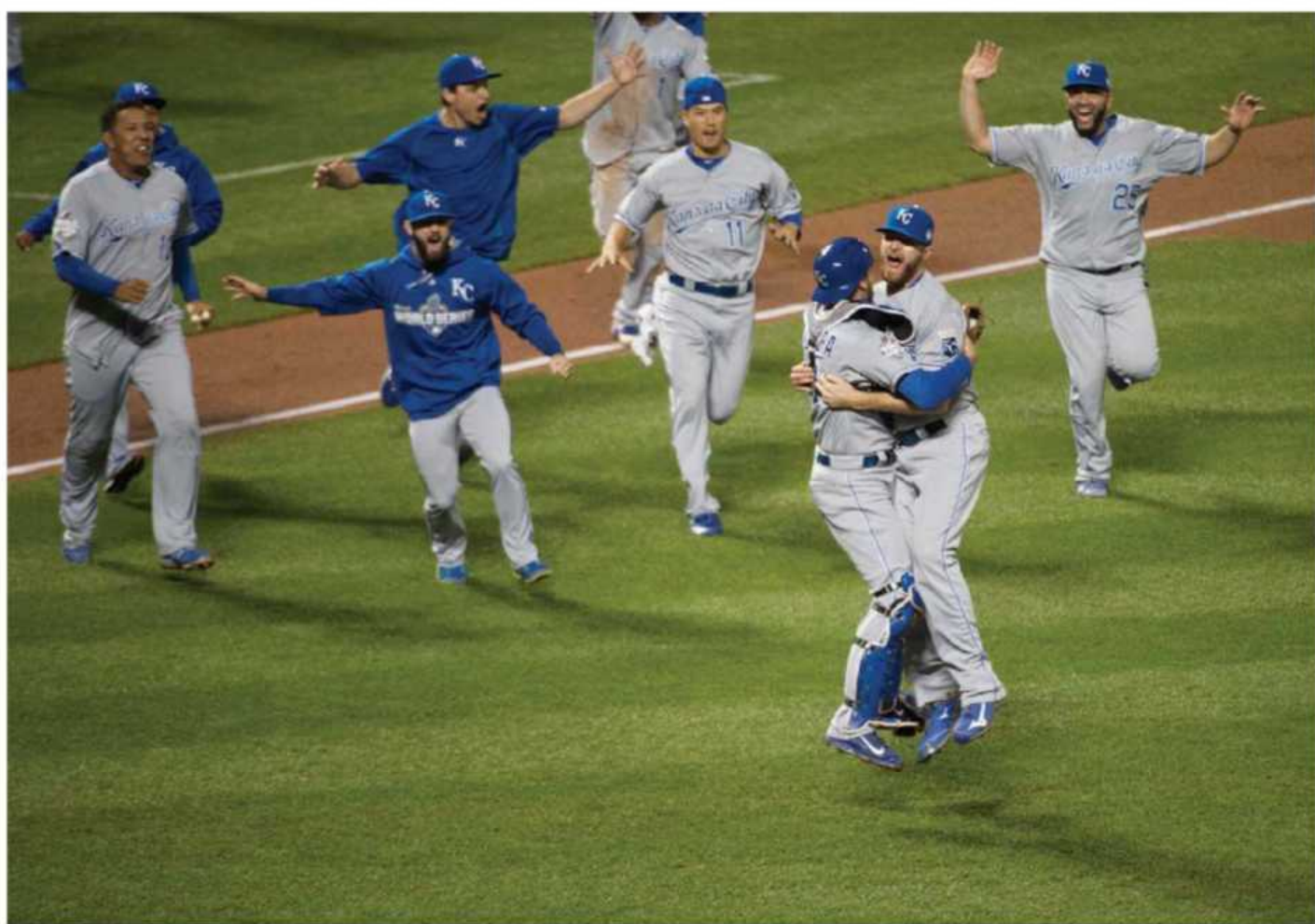
One of the biggest challenges facing Stearns is closing the sizable gap in the National League Central between his club and the Cardinals, Pirates and Cubs. All three teams made the playoffs in 2015 with the three best records in the majors—and they look formidable for years to come.

Chicago might provide a rough template for the Brewers to follow. The Cubs broke through in 2015, after a long rebuilding process, by introducing an impressive group of young stars to their roster.

With a better stocked farm system with which to begin turning his club around, Stearns said he need look no further than his own division to see how much work needs to be done.

"We want to be a part of that," he said. "We want to make this division better. We want to make this a four-team division, not a three-team division."

"Those are three very well-run organizations. We know in order to compete with them we also need to be an elite organization. That would be our goal regardless of what division we're in. It's the best division in baseball and we want to make it even better."



The hat worn by closer Wade Davis is among the many pieces of memorabilia from the Royals' World Series championship headed to the Hall of Fame

Royals exhibit is headed to Hall

BY PAUL POST

ALBANY, N.Y.

Last year, right after the World Series, Brad Horn brought two Kansas City Royals caps back to Cooperstown for display in the Hall of Fame's "Autumn Glory" exhibit. However, it was San Francisco Giants artifacts—including Buster Posey's champagne-soaked jersey—that generated the most excitement.

This year, Horn collected another deep-blue Royals cap embossed with handsome "KC" white lettering. But this year it wasn't dry.

"This cap belongs to (Royals relief pitcher) Wade Davis. It's still damp," Horn said, smiling.

Only 13 hours beforehand it had gotten soaked during the Royals' jubilant clubhouse celebration following their World Series-clinching Game Five victory over the Mets at Citi Field in New York.

In the midst of the euphoria, Horn—the Hall of Fame's vice president for education and communications—and Hall of Fame president Jeff Idelson asked Royals players for articles that would help tell the story of their championship season, the second in franchise history and the first in 30 years.

"To have the opportunity to talk to a player moments after he's won the World Series and share with him the great news that his artifact is headed to Cooperstown is priceless," Horn said. "It's amazing."

In addition to Davis' cap, the list of articles includes the catcher's glove used by World Series MVP Salvador Perez, bats from Mike Moustakas and Alcides Escobar, and the dirt-caked spikes worn by outfielder Lorenzo Cain, whose ninth-inning, leadoff

walk sparked a game-tying rally that allowed Kansas City to win Game Five and the Series in extra innings.

Horn stopped off at Albany International Airport for a press conference to display these items on his way back to "baseball's birthplace" from the Big Apple. An Eric Hosmer jersey and Johnny Cueto's cap will be shipped to Cooperstown, too.

"Every single guy was great," Horn said. "Eric Hosmer was thrilled that his jersey would be coming to Cooperstown. Moustakas was thrilled about his bat."

"He said, 'You can have whichever one you like.' Wade Davis lives in the Hudson Valley region, so he's very excited to potentially come see his cap on display in the offseason."

Keep The Line Moving

Horn and Idelson specifically looked for items that symbolized the Royals' motto: "Keep the Line Moving," which involved the whole team in contrast to one mega-star carrying the team on his back, the way Reggie Jackson led the 1977 World Series champion Yankees with three home runs in Game Six, the Series' final game against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

"These Royals just created a style of baseball that is so built upon selfless play," Horn said. "They're a great group of guys, seemingly united by their will to win. You look at their strikeout totals being so much lower than other teams. You really see a style that's very reminiscent of old school baseball; back to baseball at its roots."

It means things like advancing runners, and looking for hits instead of home runs.

It might not produce gaudy numbers or MVP awards, but every member of the 2015 Royals will get a World Series ring,

which even many of the game's immortals in Cooperstown lack.

Indirectly, Fall Classic artifacts headed to Cooperstown tell another story, too.

Both World Series teams, the Royals and Mets, primarily featured homegrown talent, the result of good scouting, carefully chosen draft picks and strong player development.

"Any time you have a lineup full of good ballplayers you're in a better position than having one or two superstars," Horn said. "The Royals really proved that. My guess is that they're going to be a force for years to come."

Of course, the Mets might have the most talented young rotation in the game with Matt Harvey, Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard and Steven Matz. These players, along with other rising stars such as Cubs third baseman Kris Bryant and Astros short-stop Carlos Correa, are part of a whole new generation of future baseball greats, whose story also came to light during the 2015 postseason.

"All the rookies had great years," Horn said. "We're seeing guys so much more prepared. These guys coming into the game today are extremely great athletes who are choosing to play baseball. Baseball is reaping the rewards."

This year, however, as reflected in the Hall of Fame's newest acquisitions, baseball's biggest award belongs to the Kansas City Royals.

"These were a great group of guys who really just willed themselves to win," Horn said. "They came within one out of tying Game Seven of the World Series last year. They fell short. Seemingly it was their mission the entire year long to keep that momentum going. Now they're going to be preserved forever in Cooperstown."

CHICAGO CUBS

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

General manager: Jed Hoyer.
Farm director: Jaron Madison.
Scouting director: Matt Dorey.

FARM SYSTEM

Classification	Affiliate	W	L
Triple-A	Iowa	80	64
Double-A	Tennessee	76	63
High Class A	Myrtle Beach	81	57
Low Class A	South Bend	65	72
Short-Season	Eugene	38	38
Rookie	AZL Cubs	31	22
OVERALL 2015 RECORD		371	316

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average	Gleyber Torres
Best Power Hitter	Eloy Jimenez
Best Strike-Zone Discipline	Mark Zagunis
Fastest Baserunner	D.J. Wilson
Best Athlete	Jacob Hannemann
Best Fastball	Dylan Cease
Best Curveball	Bryan Wilson
Best Slider	Tyler Skulina
Best Changeup	Jen-Ho Tseng
Best Control	Daury Torrez
Best Defensive Catcher	Victor Caratini
Best Defensive Infielder	Carlos Panalver
Best Infield Arm	Jeimer Candelario
Best Defensive Outfielder	Albert Almora
Best Outfield Arm	D.J. Wilson

PROJECTED 2019 LINEUP

Catcher	Kyle Schwarber
First Base	Anthony Rizzo
Second Base	Starlin Castro
Third Base	Kris Bryant
Shortstop	Addison Russell
Left Field	Javier Baez
Center Field	Albert Almora
Right Field	Jorge Soler
No. 1 Starter	Jake Arrieta
No. 2 Starter	Jon Lester
No. 3 Starter	Dylan Cease
No. 4 Starter	Duane Underwood
No. 5 Starter	Kyle Hendricks
Closer	Hector Rondon

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org
2006	Felix Pie, of	Did not play
2007	Felix Pie, of	Did not play
2008	Josh Vitters, 3b	Did not play
2009	Josh Vitters, 3b	Did not play
2010	Starlin Castro, ss	Cubs
2011	Chris Archer, rhp	Rays
2012	Brett Jackson, of	Giants
2013	Javier Baez, ss	Cubs
2014	Javier Baez, ss	Cubs
2015	Kris Bryant, 3b	Cubs

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org
2006	Tyler Colvin, of	White Sox
2007	Josh Vitters, 3b	Did not play
2008	Andrew Cashner, rhp	Padres
2009	Brett Jackson, of	Giants
2010	Hayden Simpson, rhp	Did not play
2011	Javier Baez, ss	Cubs
2012	Albert Almora, of	Cubs
2013	Kris Bryant, 3b	Cubs
2014	Kyle Schwarber, c	Cubs
2015	Ian Happ, of/2b	Cubs

LARGEST BONUSES IN CLUB HISTORY

Kris Bryant, 2013	\$6,708,400
Jorge Soler, 2012	\$6,000,000
Mark Prior, 2001	\$4,000,000
Kosuke Fukudome, 2007	\$4,000,000
Albert Almora, 2012	\$3,900,000

Cubs seek pitching for next step

BY JOHN MANUEL

The Cubs completed their rebuilding project on the field faster even than the extensive renovations at Wrigley Field.

After an active offseason that included signing free agent lefthander Jon Lester and free agent manager Joe Maddon, the Cubs won 97 games to earn one of the National League wild cards, thus becoming the first third-place team ever to qualify for the postseason.

The 97 victories tied the 2008 edition for the most by a Cubs team in the Expansion Era, and they followed a Wild Card Game victory in Pittsburgh with a four-game Division Series vanquishing of the Cardinals, the first time the Cubs had ever celebrated a playoff victory at Wrigley.

When Chicago moved on to meet the Mets in the NL Championship Series, however, the lineup was overmatched by New York's rotation and the Mets swept the series in four games.

In spite of that setback, the outlook in Chicago is bright. The players who helped the Cubs to one of the most successful seasons in franchise history form the core of team looks like a World Series challenger in 2016.

Lester, 31, had his customary strong season but yielded No. 1 starter status to Jake Arrieta, 29, whose 0.75 ERA after the all-star break was the lowest in major league history. That duo and Maddon's deft handling of a bullpen led by former Rule 5 draft pick Hector Rondon helped the



Rookie of the Year Kris Bryant bashed 26 homers and then batted third for the Cubs in the postseason

TONY PARLOW

Lester and Arrieta on the mound, so they'll need to find upgrades to Kyle Hendricks and Jason Hammel in the rotation.

They'll have to look outside the organization, though, because their upper-level pitchers have faltered. Prospects Carl Edwards and Corey Black shifted to relief, while oft-injured Pierce Johnson hasn't built any momentum since reaching Double-A Tennessee in 2014.

Of the club's top pitching options, such as righthanders Dylan Cease, Duane Underwood and Oscar de la Cruz, only Underwood has pitched in full-season ball.

The Cubs have the flexibility to deal from a deep cache of position prospects. Arismendy Alcantara and Javier Baez, once two of the club's most important prospects, have been passed by Rookie of the Year Kris Bryant, Addison Russell, Jorge Soler and Kyle Schwarber, who went from 2014 first-round pick to the Cubs' all-time post-season home run leader (five) in one year.

More hitters are on the way, from Double-A Southern League batting champion Willson Contreras and Tennessee teammates Albert Almora and Billy McKinney to shortstop Gleyber Torres. The team took Ian Happ, another advanced hitter, at the top of the 2015 draft.

There's nowhere to play them all, a fact all too clear to the front office. The current braintrust halted a long World Series drought before in Boston, and they won't rest until they do the same in Chicago.

Cubs rank third in the NL in team ERA.

The Cubs didn't feel good about their chances in the NLCS after losing the first two games with

GLEYBER TORRES, SS

BORN: Dec. 13, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 175.
SIGNED: Venezuela, 2013.
SIGNED BY: Louie Eljaua/Hector Ortega.

BACKGROUND: As an amateur, Torres trained in Venezuela with Ciro Barrios, who in 2012 had Franklin Barreto sign with the Blue Jays for \$1.45 million. Torres wasn't thought to be as advanced, but he got a \$1.7 million bonus as the Cubs blew past MLB's international bonus slots in 2013. He's shown tremendous maturity since signing and has endeared himself to club officials. He's particularly become attached to minor league infield coordinator Jose Flores, a Puerto Rico native who was a minor league shortstop in his own playing days in the early 1990s. He's put many Cubs infielders, Torres included, through hundreds of hours of fundamental defensive drills and created a bond with many of the organization's Latin American prospects from all over the region. Torres has learned quickly and thrived, finishing 2015 playing shortstop in the high Class A Carolina League playoffs as Myrtle Beach won the Mills Cup championship. He started the year as one of the youngest players in the low Class A Midwest League and earned the No. 1 prospect spot in the MWL.

SCOUTING REPORT: Torres has four above-average to plus tools, with only power lagging behind—but give him time. Torres had good strength when he signed and has improved his body significantly working with the Cubs' strength and conditioning crew, with a trimmer shape. He combines those tools with a gamer's mentality and a feel for the game on both sides of the ball. Torres' bat-to-ball skills are only mitigated by youthful aggressiveness, and as he gains experience, he should learn which pitches to

SCOUTING GRADES

BATTING: 60. **DEFENSE:** 60.
POWER: 60. **ARM:** 60.
SPEED: 55.

Based on 20-80 scouting scale and future projection rather than present grades.

selectively zone in on and drive more consistently, giving him at least average future power potential. Some club officials give Torres plus future power, particularly to his pull side. He has a knack for the barrel, uses the entire field and has a solid approach, showing a good two-strike approach for his age. He's become a much better baserunner who at times is too aggressive trying to steal but usually maximizes his above-average speed. Defensively, Torres shines with excellent instincts and footwork, giving him average range for shortstop that he pairs with a true plus arm that produces plenty of true throws with carry. Working with Flores, Torres has become efficient, consistent and a reliable defender also capable of the highlight-reel play. He carries himself with confidence and has natural leadership skills. He showed his age with a 29-for-139 (.209) finish as he wore down at the end of his first full season.

THE FUTURE: Cubs officials say Torres has an "it" factor that belies his age. He doesn't have the loud tools of big league Chicago rookies such as Kris Bryant or Addison Russell, but he's already exceeded the Cubs' expectations. The only problem is where he eventually would fit in Chicago, as the Cubs have an infield glut already. That could make Torres trade bait, particularly if he starts 2016 with a strong first half back at Myrtle Beach. As a shortstop with offensive potential, he could prove to be the Cubs' best trade chip.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
South Bend (Lo A)	.290	.350	.383	459	52	133	24	5	3	61	43	106	22
Myrtle Beach (Hi A)	.174	.208	.174	23	1	4	0	0	0	2	1	7	0

2. WILLSON CONTRERAS, C/3B



BORN: May 13, 1992. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 175. **SIGNED:** Venezuela, 2009. **SIGNED BY:** Hector Ortega/Juilio Figueroa. **BACKGROUND:** A signing snafu caused the Cubs to void Contreras' original 2009 contract. As a result, he has been eligible for the Rule 5 draft every year since 2010, but the Cubs never lost him despite his athleticism and loud tools. Introduced to catching in 2012, he broke through at Double-A Tennessee in 2015, leading the Southern League in batting (.333) and ranking second in on-base percentage (.413). **SCOUTING REPORT:** Significantly improved focus and sticking to an offensive approach helped Contreras translate his plus tools into

performance in 2015. He stopped giving away at-bats by chasing pitchers' pitches and gained confidence. He always has had natural hand-eye coordination and has grown into more strength, giving him gap power and above-average hitting ability. Formerly a plus runner, he has lost a step catching but still runs well enough to move to the outfield. Contreras toned down a hyper approach defensively, where his above-average arm used to get him in trouble, but he can still be mistake-prone, with inconsistent receiving and blocking skills that need more development. His English-language skills have improved significantly the last two years. **THE FUTURE:** Because catcher Miguel Montero is signed through 2017, Contreras has a chance to add polish to his defense at Triple-A Iowa in 2016. He's athletic enough to crack Chicago's big league roster as a multi-positional reserve, perhaps as soon as 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Tennessee (AA)	.333	.413	.478	454	71	151	34	4	8	75	57	62	4

5. DYLAN CEASE, RHP



BORN: Dec. 28, 1995. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 175. **DRAFTED:** HS—Milton, Ga., 2014 (6th round). **SIGNED BY:** Keith Lockhart. **BACKGROUND:** Georgia's track record for prep pitchers becoming big leaguers is fairly poor over the last 25 years, but the Cubs' top two pitching prospects are both Georgia preps. Cease starred at Milton High and was committed to Vanderbilt before injuring his elbow while throwing in the upper 90s in the cold March start of his senior-season schedule. He had Tommy John surgery after the Cubs drafted him and signed him for \$1.5 million.

SCOUTING REPORT: Cease fired upper-90s heat in his pro debut. He's the prototype little

guy with a quick arm that produces electric stuff. For now, he mostly is a two-pitch pitcher, both of them plus. His fastball has life even when it sits in the 96-97 mph range and earns double-plus grades, coming out easy with some deception. His low-80s curveball has the power, shape and tilt to be a plus pitch as he learns to command it. Cease's mechanics and arm action are both cleaner than they were in his amateur days, though he's still learning to repeat them. His changeup is in its early stages but has shown average potential.

THE FUTURE: Cease has tremendous upside but has yet to throw more than three innings in a professional game, and his command of the strike zone is below-average. If he can spend most or all of 2016 at low Class A South Bend, then the Cubs will have a better read on his front-of-the-rotation potential.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
AZL Cubs (R)	1	2	2.63	11	8	0	0	24	12	0	16	25	.145

3. IAN HAPP, OF/2B



BORN: Aug. 12, 1994. **B-T:** B-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 205. **DRAFTED:** Cincinnati, 2015 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Daniel Carte. **BACKGROUND:** Happ wasn't highly recruited to Cincinnati but dominated college from Day One, earning first-team All-Freshman honors and raking for two summers in the Cape Cod League. He ranked inside the top 10 in NCAA Division I in on-base (.492) and slugging (.672) percentage in 2015, when the Cubs popped him ninth overall and signed him for \$3 million on the recommendation of scout Daniel Carte, who dug deep in researching Happ's makeup. **SCOUTING REPORT:** Happ has strength, bat

speed and a sound swing from both sides of the plate, to go with selectivity and controlled aggressiveness. His ferocious swing leads to some swing-and-miss, but he drives balls all over the field and has the above-average speed to leg out hits and challenge outfielders. Happ moved all over the field in college defensively, and the Cubs left him in the outfield in his debut. He focused solely on playing second base in instructional league and impressed club officials with his athleticism, making throws from all angles and improving his footwork. He has the arm strength to be an asset defensively there. **THE FUTURE:** The Cubs say they will give Happ a long look at second base, but his bat may push him to the majors before his glove catches up. He may wind up a multi-positional utility player in the Ben Zobrist mold.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Eugene (SS)	.283	.408	.491	106	26	30	8	1	4	11	23	28	9
South Bend (Lo A)	.241	.315	.448	145	24	35	9	3	5	22	17	39	1

6. ALBERT ALMORA, OF



BORN: April 16, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 180. **DRAFTED:** HS—Hialeah Gardens, Fla., 2012 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** John Koronka/Laz Llanos.

BACKGROUND: Almora played for six USA Baseball amateur teams from 2007-11 before the Cubs drafted him sixth overall in 2012, passing on the likes of Michael Wacha and Marcus Stroman while signing Almora for \$3.9 million. He interrupted his season at Double-A Tennessee with another stint for Team USA, this time in the Pan American Games in Toronto, where he helped the Americans win a silver medal.

SCOUTING REPORT: In terms of tools,

Almora is who he is—a contact-oriented hitter with strong forearms and wrists who has a knack for making contact and avoiding strikeouts. He has improved his selectivity but still doesn't get to his raw power as consistently as scouts would like, and he's an average runner who doesn't walk or steal enough bases to be a leadoff hitter. His bat control and bat speed help him catch up to good velocity. He remains a special defender in center fielder with premium anticipation, instincts and ball-hawking ability, as well as a strong, accurate arm.

THE FUTURE: A grinder with great makeup who is regarded as an excellent teammate, Almora came on strong after his Team USA stint, hitting .302 after his return. He profiles as an everyday center fielder in the Aaron Rowand mold, and with Dexter Fowler a free agent, center field is actually a lineup spot that may be available in Chicago in the short-term.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Tennessee (AA)	.272	.327	.400	405	69	110	26	4	6	46	32	47	8

4. DUANE UNDERWOOD, RHP



BORN: July 20, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 205. **DRAFTED:** HS—Marietta, Ga., 2012 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Keith Lockhart. **BACKGROUND:** Signed for \$1.05 million, Underwood had a slow start to his pro career before gaining steam in 2014. He was off to an even stronger start in 2015 before missing a turn and then getting lit up in a June 26 start. His elbow soreness prompted a flight to Chicago to an MRI that came up clean, and Underwood rehabbed his way back from the inflammation into the high Class A Myrtle Beach rotation, making two playoff starts and showing his customary velocity.

SCOUTING REPORT: Among the Cubs' full-

season starters, Underwood has the firmest fastball, sitting in the 93-96 mph range, particularly early in games, before settling into the low 90s later. Its late life induces more early-count weak contact than empty cuts. Underwood still is learning to harness his ability to cut and sink the ball, and to set up hitters to better use his curveball and changeup. His curve has more swing-and-miss potential for some scouts, but most agree his changeup is more consistent and ahead of his breaking ball currently. Both have flashed plus but grade no better than average consistently, leading to a modest strikeout rate.

THE FUTURE: Consistency is the key to Underwood, who has improved his fitness and pro routine and now needs to bring it all together. A full, healthy season at Double-A Tennessee would put him on the cusp of Chicago as a potential No. 3 starter.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Myrtle Beach (Hi A)	6	3	2.58	14	14	0	0	73	52	6	24	48	.202

7. BILLY MCKINNEY, OF



BORN: Aug. 23, 1994. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 195. **DRAFTED:** HS—Plano, Texas, 2013 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Armann Brown (Athletics).

BACKGROUND: It only seems like the Cubs traded Jeff Samardzija to the Athletics for Addison Russell. They also acquired McKinney, the Oakland first-rounder in 2013, barely a year after he was drafted. He failed to finish either of his two full seasons healthy, with a sore shoulder limiting him to DH duty in 2014 and a broken right knee cap, the result of his own foul ball, sidelining him in August 2015.

SCOUTING REPORT: While it's not the smoothest swing, thanks to a bit of an arm

bar, McKinney has excellent hand-eye coordination and strike-zone judgment, giving him plus hitting ability. He has fringy power but likely not enough to be an impact bat, and he struggled against lefthanders at Double-A Tennessee in 2015, hitting .212 with two extra-base hits in 85 at-bats. He's an average athlete and runner who can play all three outfield positions adequately, with a fringe-average arm that fits best in left field.

THE FUTURE: McKinney excels at the game's most important skill—hitting. He'll either have to revert to his past success against same-side pitchers or significantly improve his defense in center field to fit a first-division profile for the Cubs, who look set on the corners with Jorge Soler and Kyle Schwarber. A return to Tennessee seems likely.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Myrtle Beach (Hi A)	.340	.432	.544	103	19	35	5	2	4	25	17	13	0
Tennessee (AA)	.285	.346	.420	274	29	78	26	1	3	39	27	47	0

8. OSCAR DE LA CRUZ, RHP



BORN: March 4, 1995. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 230. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2012. **SIGNED BY:** Jose Serra/Marino Encarnacion.

BACKGROUND: Before he signed, de la Cruz was working out for teams as a 6-foot-4, 200-pound shortstop. When that didn't work out, he shifted to the mound and signed with the Cubs for \$85,000 as a 17-year-old in October 2012, but he was so raw he spent two years in the Dominican Summer League. He took a leap forward in 2015 by harnessing his delivery and emerging as the best prospect on a talented short-season Eugene staff.

SCOUTING REPORT: Physicality is de la

Cruz's calling card. Some club officials project he could be as tall as 6-foot-6 and could push 250 pounds when he finishes growing, and he has a fast arm. His fastball sits in the 92-93 mph range but bumps 97 regularly when his delivery is in sync and he's getting extension out front. At his best, his fastball features above-average life, movement and angle to go with its velocity, making it a potential double-plus pitch. His curveball flashes plus and pushes 80-81 mph. He's still learning to throw his changeup with proper arm speed. Competitiveness is an asset for de la Cruz, who has shown a mean streak on the mound.

THE FUTURE: Club officials try to rein in their enthusiasm with regard to de la Cruz, but they clearly have high hopes for him. He projects to start 2016 at low Class A South Bend, a level he could dominate with his strike-throwing ability and premium heater.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Eugene (SS)	6	3	2.84	13	13	0	0	73	56	4	17	73	.211

9. ELOY JIMENEZ, OF



BORN: Nov. 27, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 205. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2013. **SIGNED BY:** Jose Serra/Carlos Reyes.

BACKGROUND: The No. 1 international prospect on the 2013 board, Jimenez signed for \$2.8 million, the largest bonus of any Latin American amateur that year. He made significant strides in the short-season Northwest League in 2015, playing every day, earning midseason all-star honors, ranking ninth in the league in batting (.284) and leading Eugene in home runs (seven) and RBIs (33).

SCOUTING REPORT: Jimenez has the most raw power of any Cubs minor leaguer, with long levers that help him produce light-tower

power. He'll always have some holes in his swing, but when he fully grows into his body and learns to fully incorporate his lower half, he could be a physical monster of the Jorge Soler model. He has the tools to fit the right-field profile, with average speed that allowed him to play center field in instructional league. But he has played more left field to this point. His defensive skills continue to evolve, though his throwing mechanics are inconsistent. Intelligent and mature, Jimenez has started to add more toughness.

THE FUTURE: The classic high-risk, high-reward teen, Jimenez will make his full-season debut as a 19-year-old at low Class A South Bend in 2016. He may need 2,000 at-bats in the minors to iron out his pitch recognition and plate discipline, but the Cubs have time to wait, and his bat could be special.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Eugene (SS)	.284	.328	.418	232	36	66	10	0	7	33	15	43	3

10. JEIMER CANDELARIO, 3B



BORN: Nov. 24, 1993. **B-T:** B-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 210. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2010. **SIGNED BY:** Jose Serra/Marino Encarnacion.

BACKGROUND: Born in the U.S., Candelario grew up in San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic, and signed as a 16-year-old. He ranked in the organization's Top 10 Prospects twice before reaching high Class A in 2014, where he experienced his first roadblock as a pro and didn't handle failure well. He bounced back in 2015, reaching Double-A Tennessee and leading the organization with 35 doubles.

SCOUTING REPORT: Candelario is the Cubs' best defensive infielder thanks to a plus arm, soft hands and smooth actions. His instincts

and internal clock maximize his average range at third base, and he has the agility to handle slow rollers. He's a switch-hitter whose swing and approach remain consistent from both sides of the plate, with the ability to use the whole field and hit for solid-average power. He covers the plate enough to make consistent contact and successfully became more aggressive this year, which paid off against advanced pitchers who are around the strike zone more often.

THE FUTURE: Blocked by Kris Bryant at third base, Candelario could still be an internal option if Bryant winds up moving to the outfield. A likely candidate to be added to the 40-man roster this winter, Candelario should return to Tennessee to start 2016 and profiles as a solid regular at third, if not a star.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Myrtle Beach (Hi A)	.270	.318	.415	318	42	86	25	3	5	39	20	62	0
Tennessee (AA)	.291	.379	.462	158	21	46	10	1	5	25	22	21	0

CINCINNATI REDS

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

General manager: Dick Williams.

Farm director: Jeff Graupe.

Scouting director: Chris Buckley.

FARM SYSTEM

Classification	Affiliate	W	L
Triple-A	Louisville	64	80
Double-A	Pensacola	63	75
High Class A	Daytona	77	58
Low Class A	Dayton	71	68
Rookie	Billings	37	38
Rookie	AZL Reds	27	29
OVERALL 2015 RECORD		339	348

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average	Jesse Winker
Best Power Hitter	Taylor Sparks
Best Strike-Zone Discipline	Jesse Winker
Fastest Baserunner	Mitch Piatnik
Best Athlete	Amir Garrett
Best Fastball	Sal Romano
Best Curveball	Wyatt Strahan
Best Slider	Cody Reed
Best Changeup	Robert Stephenson
Best Control	Tyler Mahle
Best Defensive Catcher	Joe Hudson
Best Defensive Infielder	Taylor Sparks
Best Infield Arm	Taylor Sparks
Best Defensive Outfielder	Beau Amaral
Best Outfield Arm	Aristides Aquino

PROJECTED 2019 LINEUP

Catcher	Devin Mesoraco
First Base	Joey Votto
Second Base	Alex Blandino
Third Base	Todd Frazier
Shortstop	Eugenio Suarez
Left Field	Jesse Winker
Center Field	Billy Hamilton
Right Field	Jay Bruce
No. 1 Starter	Robert Stephenson
No. 2 Starter	Cody Reed
No. 3 Starter	Homer Bailey
No. 4 Starter	Raisel Iglesias
No. 5 Starter	Amir Garrett
Closer	Aroldis Chapman

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org.
2006	Homer Bailey, rhp	Reds
2007	Homer Bailey, rhp	Reds
2008	Jay Bruce, of	Reds
2009	Yonder Alonso, 1b	Padres
2010	Todd Frazier, 3b	Reds
2011	Aroldis Chapman, lhp	Reds
2012	Devin Mesoraco, c	Reds
2013	Billy Hamilton, of	Reds
2014	Robert Stephenson, rhp	Reds
2015	Robert Stephenson, rhp	Reds

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org.
2006	Drew Stubbs, of	Rangers
2007	Devin Mesoraco, c	Reds
2008	Yonder Alonso, 1b	Padres
2009	Mike Leake, rhp	Giants
2010	Yasmani Grandal, c	Dodgers
2011	Robert Stephenson, rhp	Reds
2012	Nick Travieso, rhp	Reds
2013	Phillip Ervin, of	Reds
2014	Nick Howard, rhp	Reds
2015	Tyler Stephenson, c	Reds

LARGEST BONUSES IN CLUB HISTORY

Aroldis Chapman, 2010	\$16,250,000
Raisel Iglesias, 2014	\$5,000,000
Tyler Stephenson, 2015	\$3,141,600
Chris Gruler, 2002	\$2,500,000
Homer Bailey, 2004	\$2,300,000

BY J.J. COOPER

The Reds signed and developed an enviable wave of homegrown talent in the first decade of the 2000s. Players like Joey Votto, Johnny Cueto, Jay Bruce and Homer Bailey all reached the majors around the same time and contributed to a trio of playoff teams in 2010, 2012 and 2013.

Coming up right behind them were the fruits of an excellent 2007 draft that included Devin Mesoraco, Todd Frazier and Zack Cozart. An astute signing of Cuban lefthander Aroldis Chapman just added to the youth movement.

Votto developed into one of the best hitters in baseball. Cueto proved to be a No. 1 starter, while Bruce, Frazier, Chapman and Mesoraco all have made all-star teams.

But it's time to write a disappointing eulogy for this group of Reds stars. As talented as they are, the best homegrown group the Reds have produced in decades failed to win a playoff series.

The Reds were swept and no-hit by Roy Halladay and the Phillies in 2010. Two years later, a 97-win Reds team led the Giants two games to none in the NL Division Series but then lost three straight. A year later, the Reds lost in the Wild Card Game to the Pirates.

The Reds made a few offseason tweaks heading into 2015—they traded Mat Latos and Alfredo Simon—but pending free agents Johnny Cueto and Mike Leake were retained. Cincinnati



The 2007 draft class, highlighted by all-star third baseman Todd Frazier, kept the Reds competitive

also signed free agent outfielder Marlon Byrd.

But the team the Reds' envisioned making one more playoff push never showed up. Bailey suc-

cumbed to an elbow injury in April. Mesoraco caught just six games before a hip injury ruined his season. A knee injury finished Cozart's season in June.

The Reds' injuries were difficult to overcome, but they also deflected blame from what was an impossible task. Even if everything had gone perfectly for the Reds in 2015, they likely would have found themselves failing to keep up in the best division in baseball. At least by falling apart so quickly, the Reds were able to switch to rebuilding mode for the first time since Votto and Cueto arrived as regulars in 2008.

The Reds traded Cueto, Leake and Byrd. Cincinnati turned to an all-rookie rotation for the final 40 percent of the season, and the Reds will pick second overall in the 2016 draft.

Cincinnati has to decide whether it's willing to get even worse in the short term to get better. Even with Votto and Frazier in their primes, it's hard to see how even a tweaked Reds team can compete in 2016. Trading away Bruce, Chapman and/or Brandon Phillips will not help Cincinnati win more games in 2016, but it may be their best bet to try to compete again in 2017 and beyond.

Adding to that impetus, the Reds have split the executive duties. Walt Jocketty remains president, but Dick Williams, a former investor banker/venture capitalist, has been named the team's general manager. Jocketty has said that 2016 will be his last year as decision maker.

ROBERT STEPHENSON, RHP

BORN: Feb. 24, 1993. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** HS—Martinez, Calif., 2011 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Rich Bordi.

BACKGROUND: Stephenson was the first high school pitcher the Reds had selected in the first round since picking Homer Bailey in 2004. Like Bailey, Stephenson has risen through the minors on the basis of a high-90s fastball and a hard-breaking curveball. And like Bailey, Stephenson found the going much tougher once he reached the upper levels of the minors. Bailey reached the majors in his fourth pro season, 2007, but didn't arrive for good until 2010. Stephenson reached Triple-A Louisville in his fourth pro season, but he still is a little ways away from being ready for the big league rotation. The Reds did not call up Stephenson in September even though he will be added to the 40-man roster this offseason to protect him from the Rule 5 draft. The Reds used nine other rookie starters, so it wasn't for lack of opportunity or a roster spot. After Bailey's early big league struggles, the Reds have learned to take it slow, so Stephenson spent more than a year and a half at Double-A Pensacola in 2014 and 2015. The Reds now believe it's better to let Stephenson work through his control problems in the minors rather than in the majors where he'll be building service time.

SCOUTING REPORT: For years, hitters have known that when Stephenson gets ahead in the count, they have to watch out for his double-plus curveball. This year, he gave them something else to worry about. He went back to the split-changeup grip he used in high school. The Reds had taken the pitch away earlier in Stephenson's career because they felt it was harder on his elbow. He grew more and more comfortable with his

SCOUTING GRADES

FASTBALL: 60. **CHANGEUP:** 70. **CURVEBALL:** 70. **CONTROL:** 45.

Based on 20-80 scouting scale and future projection rather than present grades.

old/new change in 2015, and now it garners plus grades most outings and has gotten double-plus grades on better nights. That's a vast improvement over the fringy traditional changeup he threw last year. He commands it better and it has more late action, generating more weak contact and swings and misses. But as his changeup improved, Stephenson's curveball seemed to back up. While his curve still is a 70 pitch at its best, Stephenson didn't locate it nearly as well or throw it nearly as often in 2015. His fastball also backed up. He dialed back his velocity significantly in an attempt to be more precise. The 94-99 mph he showed in the past became 92-94 with the occasional 97. Stephenson's delivery has no major flaws, but he has below-average control which stems from when he fails to stay tall in his delivery, collapsing too much on his back leg. When that happens, he throws uphill, which makes it hard for him to locate down in the zone.

THE FUTURE: Throwing strikes is the No. 1 goal for Stephenson. Even with a reduction in his velocity, he has three plus pitches to toy with hitters if he can get ahead in counts. In the 14 starts in which he threw at least 60 percent strikes, he went 6-3, 2.39 with 90 strikeouts and 28 walks in 87 innings. Stephenson has front-of-the-rotation stuff that he will realize with better control. An assignment to Louisville seems probable in 2016, as does an in-season callup to the rebuilding Reds.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Pensacola (AA)	4	7	3.68	14	14	1	0	78	53	8	43	89	.197
Louisville (AAA)	4	4	4.04	11	11	0	0	56	51	2	27	51	.245

2. CODY REED, LHP



BORN: April 15, 1993. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-5. **WT.:** 220. **DRAFTED:** Northwest Mississippi JC, 2013 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Travis Ezi (Royals).

BACKGROUND: The Royals believed that the somewhat-raw Reed had one of the better arms among lefthanders in the 2013 draft. For two seasons, he flashed big-time stuff but also big-time control issues before it all came together. The Reds acquired Reed—along with lefthanders Brandon Finnegan and John Lamb—in the Johnny Cueto deadline trade.

SCOUTING REPORT: Reed can dominate with two pitches. His 70 fastball will range anywhere from 91-97 mph. Reed's fastball has

late, darting life and his low three-quarters arm slot makes it especially rough on lefthanded hitters. His 85-87 mph slider is a second plus offering that received double-plus grades from some scouts. It's a wipeout offering with hard, late tilt. Reed's changeup is average to a tick above, depending on the outing. He doesn't use it all that often. His control improved significantly in 2015 and his delivery carries no glaring red flags.

THE FUTURE: Reed has a ceiling as a potential No. 2 starter, with his biggest red flag being lack of track record, for he had little success before 2015. He will compete for a spot in the Triple-A Louisville rotation in 2016 and could even be in Cincinnati at some point.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Wilmington (Hi A)	5	5	2.14	13	10	1	0	67	62	3	18	65	.243
NW Arkansas (AA)	2	2	3.45	5	5	0	0	29	26	3	8	19	.239
Pensacola (AA)	6	2	2.17	8	8	0	0	50	39	1	16	60	.220

5. JESSE WINKER, OF



BORN: Aug. 17, 1993. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 210. **DRAFTED:** HS—Orlando, 2012 (1st round supplemental). **SIGNED BY:** Greg Zunino.

BACKGROUND: The best pure hitter in the Reds system since the day he signed, Winker struggled in a brief promotion to Double-A Pensacola in 2014 before his season was cut short by a broken wrist. Two months into the 2015 season, he was still struggling to drive the ball, but he hit .316/.426/.516 in the second half and connected for 11 of his 13 homers after June 1.

SCOUTING REPORT: Winker always has had an advanced approach with a balanced batting

stance. He has a very simple toe-tap timing mechanism, quick hands and a quiet setup. He uses his legs well in his swing but has a very small load, trusting his hands and bat speed to provide his power. At his best, Winker drives the ball the opposite way to pepper the left-field wall, and he hits the ball out to all fields. He struggled against lefthanders in 2015 but has hit them well over his career. Defensively, Winker has worked hard to become playable in the outfield, but he's limited by below-average speed. His fringe-average arm plays in left field, where he recorded 15 assists.

THE FUTURE: Scouts who like Winker believe he's an above-average hitter who should provide on-base value and solid-average power. Others don't believe he has the power to profile as an impact regular. He should make his Triple-A debut in 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Pensacola (AA)	.282	.390	.433	443	69	125	24	2	13	55	74	83	8

8. KEURY MELLA, RHP



BORN: Aug. 2, 1993. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 200. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2011. **SIGNED BY:** Pablo Peguero (Giants).

BACKGROUND: The Giants signed Mella for \$275,000 as an 18-year-old out of the Dominican Republic in 2011. He already had a 92-93 mph fastball and impressive curve, and his "advanced" age allowed him to move quickly in pro ball. He missed some time in 2014 with a minor rotator-cuff injury but showed no ill effects this year. The Reds acquired him, along with third baseman Adam Duvall, when they traded Mike Leake to the Giants.

SCOUTING REPORT: A thick-legged pitcher with present strength, Mella has a pair of plus

pitches in a 91-95 mph fastball that touches 97 and a 78-82 mph curveball that has a sharp 11-to-5 break. He doesn't yet trust his changeup enough to make it a solid third offering, but it has average potential because he throws it with excellent arm speed. The big question scouts have with Mella is his delivery, which is up-tempo, long in the back and effortful as he throws across his body. The crossfire delivery adds deception but also makes it hard to command his fastball to his arm side. Cincinnati worked to get him more direct to the plate.

THE FUTURE: The Reds will keep Mella in the rotation for now, though many evaluators believe he'll end up in the bullpen as a power reliever. A fast arm and natural strength give him a chance to repeat his delivery, and he'll join a crowded Double-A Pensacola rotation.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
San Jose (Hi A)	5	3	3.31	16	16	0	0	82	66	5	26	83	.216
Daytona (Hi A)	3	1	2.95	4	4	0	0	21	11	2	15	23	.151

3. AMIR GARRETT, LHP



BORN: May 3, 1992. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-5. **WT.:** 225. **DRAFTED:** HS—Henderson, Nev., 2011 (22nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Clark Crist.

BACKGROUND: A top high school basketball recruit who toyed with baseball, Garrett made a couple of showcase appearances and intrigued scouts with his 95 mph velocity and extreme athleticism. Under the old draft rules, the Reds were able to spend \$1 million in 2011 to convince Garrett to pitch when he wasn't playing basketball. That gamble paid off when the 6-foot-5 southpaw gave up basketball in 2014. He pitched in the 2015 Futures Game in Cincinnati.

SCOUTING REPORT: Using a modified workout program, Garrett has added 20 pounds of good weight since giving up basketball. Everything for Garrett begins with a plus fastball. It's what got him drafted and it's still his best pitch. He can dominate with a 94-96 mph heater that he locates to both sides of the plate. His slider also flashes plus, but its quality varies significantly from start to start. Garrett's changeup is clearly his third-best option, but it flashes average as well. He always has had fringy control and command, but his stuff is good enough to succeed if he can develop even average control. He shuts down running games with quick times (1.1 seconds) to the plate.

THE FUTURE: Garrett will head to Double-A Pensacola in 2016. He's one of the Reds' older pitching prospects, but he's also one of the fastest developing. Garrett has a chance to develop into a mid-rotation starter with a fallback option of power lefthanded reliever.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Daytona (Hi A)	9	7	2.44	26	26	1	0	140	117	4	55	133	.230

6. ALEX BLANDINO, SS/2B



BORN: Nov. 6, 1992. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 190. **DRAFTED:** Stanford, 2014 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Rich Bordi.

BACKGROUND: A three-year starter at third base for Stanford, Blandino is the rare draftee who moves back to shortstop as a pro. He ranked as one of the best hitters in the high Class A Florida State League in the first half of 2015, though he missed most of July with a finger injury. After playing shortstop in all but 12 games in 2015, the Reds sent him to the Arizona Fall League to focus on playing second base.

SCOUTING REPORT: Blandino lacks a plus tool but has few significant weaknesses. He

projects as a solid regular at second base with quality range and arm strength. Good positioning and sure hands can mitigate below-average range, giving Blandino at least a chance to appear at shortstop in the big leagues. As a hitter, he is notable for the consistency of his at-bats. His average dipped after a promotion to Double-A, but the quality of his at-bats didn't. He projects as a tick above-average hitter with the power to hit 11-15 home runs.

THE FUTURE: Blandino is a solid all-around middle infielder who projects to be a long-time big league regular. Reds second baseman Brandon Phillips is under contract through 2017, but Blandino should be ready to assume playing time before then. He'll return to Double-A Pensacola in 2016 but could reach Triple-A Louisville before too long.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Daytona (Hi A)	.294	.370	.438	299	46	88	18	2	7	35	31	56	7
Pensacola (AA)	.235	.350	.374	115	15	27	7	0	3	18	18	21	2

9. SAL ROMANO, RHP



BORN: Oct. 12, 1993. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 220. **DRAFTED:** HS—Southington, Conn., 2011 (23rd round). **SIGNED BY:** Lee Seras.

BACKGROUND: A 23rd-round pick who received a well above-slot bonus (\$450,000) to turn down Tennessee for pro ball, Romano has lived up to expectations as a big, fresh-armed Northeastern pitcher with room to grow. His fastball just keeps getting better and better, and the once low-90s fastball has now touched 99 mph. He can carry 96 deep into games.

SCOUTING REPORT: Romano can elevate out of the zone with a 95-99 mph four-seam fastball, but he's at his best when he's throw-

ing a 93-95 two-seamer with turbo sink. He got away from that approach in a late-season promotion to Double-A Pensacola, staying up in the zone too often and getting shelled. He also learned that he has to locate his secondary offerings better. Romano sometimes shelved his power curve for a harder, slurry slider that is a less impressive, less consistent and more hittable pitch. The Reds have stressed to him the importance of throwing the power, low-80s, downward-breaking curveball more often. He needs to improve the ability to throw his breaking balls for strikes, which can also be said for his improving, but still inconsistent, changeup.

THE FUTURE: Romano has the durability and stuff to be a No. 4 starter, but his high-energy approach and velocity would also allow him to move quickly as a setup man or closer.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Daytona (Hi A)	6	5	3.46	19	18	1	0	104	103	2	33	79	.261
Pensacola (AA)	0	4	10.96	7	7	0	0	23	35	4	12	9	.354

4. TYLER STEPHENSON, C



BILL MITCHELL

BORN: Oct. 16, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 225. **DRAFTED:** HS—Kennesaw, Ga., 2015 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** John Poloni.

BACKGROUND: Stephenson flew up draft boards in 2015 when the Georgia Tech recruit went from possible top-50 pick to someone rumored to be in consideration at No. 1 overall. The Reds were thrilled when he fell to them and they signed him quickly for \$3.1 million. The Reds aggressively pushed Stephenson to the Rookie-level Pioneer League.

SCOUTING REPORT: The Reds felt comfortable jumping Stephenson over the Rookie-level Arizona League because of his advanced hitting approach. He focuses on maintaining

balance and control with his stance, with very little load in his swing. He has a line drive-oriented swing that sacrifices carry for contact. His swing naturally drives the ball to right-center field, but he needs to use his lower half better before he can consistently pull the ball for power. Optimistic projections peg Stephenson for 15-20 home runs eventually, to go with an above-average hit tool. He has a plus arm and the tools to be an average defender if he works on maintaining his agility. He's big for a catcher, but he's flexible with quiet hands.

THE FUTURE: Stephenson is more advanced than Devin Mesoraco—the last first-round prep catcher taken by the Reds—at the same stage, and big-bodied backstops like Salvador Perez, Matt Wieters and Joe Mauer have largely eradicated the notion that anyone 6-foot-4 or taller can't catch. Next up for Stephenson is an assignment to low Class A Dayton.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Billings (R)	.268	.352	.361	194	28	52	15	0	1	16	22	42	0

7. NICK TRAVIESO, RHP



BORN: Jan. 31, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 215. **DRAFTED:** HS—Southwest Ranches, Fla., 2012 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Tony Arias/Miguel Machado.

BACKGROUND: Travieso's slow but steady climb up the minor league ladder took a step back when a comebacker broke a bone in his forearm in June 2015. He returned in time to help high Class A Daytona to the Florida State League playoffs and went to the Arizona Fall League to make up for lost time.

SCOUTING REPORT: Travieso is yet another Reds pitcher with a strong trunk and thick legs, and the plus fastball to go with them. In high school, he was very open in his delivery and

finish. He's straighter to the plate now, which has also helped him create more angle on his pitches. Travieso's fastball generates easy plus grades because it sits 92-95 mph and touches 97, and he spots it well to both sides of the plate with solid-average control. His secondary offerings are key to his development. His average 83-84 mph slider has some depth and is his go-to weapon, but midway through 2015 he also added a slower curve as an early-count offering to try to disrupt hitters' timing. His fringe-average changeup showed improvement this year as he threw it with more conviction.

THE FUTURE: Even after spending three seasons at Class A, Travieso will be ready for Double-A Pensacola in 2016 as a 22-year-old. His fastball, durability and control give him a good chance to be mid-rotation starter.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Daytona (Hi A)	6	6	2.70	19	19	0	0	93	82	4	30	76	.231

10. TYLER MAHLE, RHP



BORN: Sept. 29, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** HS—Westminster, Calif., 2013 (7th round). **SIGNED BY:** Mike Musuraca.

BACKGROUND: When a team signs a skinny, seventh-round high school pitcher to an above-slot \$250,000 bonus, this is what they hope will happen. Mahle, whose brother Greg pitches in the Angels system, has gotten stronger, added 2-4 mph of velocity, and his continual refinement has been even more impressive than the jump in velocity.

SCOUTING REPORT: Scouts see Mahle as a Mike Leake-type who lacks a devastating pitch but has an ability to succeed thanks to control/

command and three solid offerings. Mahle throws harder than Leake and sits 91-94 mph and touches 96. He does a good job of altering his velocity to toy with hitters' timing. He loves to pitch inside and his fastball has solid life. Mahle has exceptional control for his age and is one of the Reds' most efficient pitchers, as he could make it through six innings on 65-75 pitches. His curveball and changeup are both solid-average offerings, though his curveball flashes above-average at its best when it shows tight, 12-to-6 break.

THE FUTURE: Mahle has taken significant strides in his two years as a pro. Even if he doesn't add any more velocity or sharpen his curveball or changeup, his combination of stuff and command should give him a chance to succeed as a mid-rotation starter, and he's young enough to make further strides. He heads to high Class A Daytona in 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Dayton (Lo A)	13	8	2.43	27	26	0	0	152	145	7	25	135	.252

MILWAUKEE BREWERS

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

General manager: David Stearns.
Farm director: Vacant.
Scouting director: Ray Montgomery.

FARM SYSTEM			
Classification	Affiliate	W	L
Triple-A	Colorado Springs	62	81
Double-A	Biloxi	78	59
High Class A	Brevard County	55	80
Low Class A	Wisconsin	50	89
Rookie	Helena	32	42
Rookie-	AZL Brewers	23	33
OVERALL 2015 RECORD		300	384

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average	Trent Clark
Best Power Hitter	Victor Roache
Best Strike-Zone Discipline	Michael Reed
Fastest Baserunner	Omar Garcia
Best Athlete	Monte Harrison
Best Fastball	Yhonathan Barrios
Best Curveball	Jorge Lopez
Best Slider	Kodi Medeiros
Best Changeup	Zach Davies
Best Control	Jorge Ortega
Best Defensive Catcher	Adam Weisenburger
Best Defensive Infielder	Orlando Arcia
Best Infield Arm	Orlando Arcia
Best Defensive Outfielder	Tyrone Taylor
Best Outfield Arm	Clint Coulter

PROJECTED 2019 LINEUP

Catcher	Jonathan Lucroy
First Base	Ryan Braun
Second Base	Jean Segura
Third Base	Gilbert Lara
Shortstop	Orlando Arcia
Left Field	Domingo Santana
Center Field	Trent Clark
Right Field	Brett Phillips
No. 1 Starter	Jorge Lopez
No. 2 Starter	Jimmy Nelson
No. 3 Starter	Kodi Medeiros
No. 4 Starter	Taylor Jungmann
No. 5 Starter	Cody Ponce
Closer	Damien Magnifico

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org.
2006	Prince Fielder, 1b	Rangers
2007	Yovani Gallardo, rhp	Rangers
2008	Matt LaPorta, of	Out of baseball
2009	Alcides Escobar, ss	Royals
2010	Alcides Escobar, ss	Royals
2011	Mark Rogers, rhp	Bridgeport (Atlantic)
2012	Wily Peralta, rhp	Brewers
2013	Wily Peralta, rhp	Brewers
2014	Jimmy Nelson, rhp	Brewers
2015	Tyrone Taylor, of	Brewers

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org.
2006	Jeremy Jeffress, rhp	Brewers
2007	Matt LaPorta, of	Out of baseball
2008	Brett Lawrie, c/3b	Athletics
2009	Eric Arnett, rhp	Out of baseball
2010	*Dylan Covey, rhp	Athletics
2011	Taylor Jungmann, rhp	Brewers
2012	Clint Coulter, c	Brewers
2013	Devin Williams, rhp (2nd round)	Brewers
2014	Kodi Medeiros, lhp	Brewers
2015	Trent Clark, of	Brewers

*Did not sign

LARGEST BONUSES IN CLUB HISTORY

Rickie Weeks, 2003	\$3,600,000
Trent Clark, 2015	\$2,700,000
Taylor Jungmann, 2011	\$2,525,000
Kodi Medeiros, 2014	\$2,500,000
Ben Sheets, 1999	\$2,450,000
Ryan Braun, 2005	\$2,450,000

New GM directs Brewers' rebuild

BY TOM HAUDRICOURT

The 2015 season quickly became one of major changes for the Brewers.

The first major change occurred on May 4, when the Brewers fired manager Ron Roenicke. Milwaukee staggered to a 5-17 record in April, which followed on the heels of a 9-22 collapse at the end of 2014 that knocked them from playoff contention. Taking over as manager was Craig Counsell, a special assistant to general manager Doug Melvin.

The losing didn't stop, leaving the Brewers little choice but to implement a rebuilding plan on their way to a fourth-place finish in the National League Central. Step one of the rebuild: Trade productive veterans for young talent.

Milwaukee made three significant trades in July—sending Aramis Ramirez to the Pirates, Gerardo Parra to the Orioles and Carlos Gomez and Mike Fiers to the Astros—that brought back five of the system's top 30 prospects.

Less than two weeks after the July 31 trade deadline, the Brewers announced that Melvin would step aside into an advisory role. The search for a new GM commenced, culminating with the hiring of 30-year-old Astros assistant David Stearns before the season ended.

In his quest to return the Brewers to contention, Stearns will have the benefit of an improved farm system. In particular, the Gomez trade with the Astros netted four prospects: outfielders



The Brewers initiated a full rebuild in 2015, then hired 30-year-old David Stearns as general manager

Brett Phillips and Domingo Santana, lefthander Josh Hader and righthander Adrian Houser.

Righthander Zach Davies, acquired from the

Orioles for Parra, made six starts and didn't allow a run over his final 15 innings. The Ramirez trade netted hard-throwing reliever Yhonathan Barrios, who made five scoreless appearances.

Milwaukee's 2015 draft class showed initial promise. First-round outfielder Trent Clark ranked as the No. 1 prospect in the Rookie-level Arizona League and second-round righthander Cody Ponce reached low Class A Wisconsin.

Trading so many veterans consigned the Brewers to a 68-94 record, their worst showing since 2004. With the division-rival Cardinals, Pirates and Cubs posting the three top records in baseball in 2015, the Brewers face a daunting task of becoming competitive again.

The 2015 rotation proved to be a major weak point. High-paid veterans Kyle Lohse and Matt Garza combined to go 11-27, 5.74 in 301 innings, while No. 3 starter Wily Peralta suffered through an injury-plagued, ineffective season.

Helping fill the void was rookie righthander Taylor Jungmann, who finally began fulfilling his promise as a 2011 first-round pick. Righty Jimmy Nelson showed enough progress to establish himself in the rotation, but a liner to the head knocked him out of action on Sept. 17.

The final weeks of the season became an audition for 2016. The Brewers rewarded six members of Double-A Biloxi, the Southern League runners-up, with callups: righties Houser, Jorge Lopez and Tyler Wagner; shortstop Yadiel Rivera, outfielder Michael Reed and Barrios, the reliever.



**NO. 1
PROSPECT**

ORLANDO ARCIA, SS

BORN: Aug. 4, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 175.
SIGNED: Venezuela, 2010.
SIGNED BY: Fernando Arango.

BACKGROUND: The younger brother of Twins outfielder Oswaldo, Arcia enhanced his standing as one of the top shortstop prospects in baseball with his performance at Double-A Biloxi in 2015. He established personal bests in nearly every offensive category, while continuing to display impressive defensive skill. Beyond his on-field performance, Arcia became a team leader while playing much of the season at age 20. The Shuckers played the first 54 games of the Southern League season on the road while awaiting the completion of their new ballpark in Biloxi, Miss., and Arcia and his teammates rose to the occasion by claiming the first-half Southern Division crown. He raised his performance to a new level in the SL playoffs, when he hit .400 (12-for-30) with three homers, three doubles, a triple and 10 RBIs in eight games for the league runners-up. He made the SL postseason all-star team after clubbing a league-leading 37 doubles and hitting .307 to rank fifth in the batting race. He also finished among the SL elite with 157 hits (second), 52 extra-base hits (third), 74 runs (fifth) and 68 RBIs (fifth), and he led all SL shortstops in assists (376) and double plays (82).

SCOUTING REPORT: Arcia has a confidence that is easy to see, maturity beyond his years and the instincts that only come naturally in being at the right place at the right time. His defensive skills are beyond reproach. He has the range, hands and arms teams seek in a Gold Glove-caliber shortstop, with tremendous instincts and flair for making big plays at key times. It was at the plate that Arcia showed the

SCOUTING GRADES

BATTING: 65. **DEFENSE:** 70.
POWER: 45. **ARM:** 70.
SPEED: 65.

Based on 20-80 scouting scale—where 50 represents major league average—and future projection rather than present tools.

most growth in 2015, though he still is too aggressive at times for his own good and does not draw enough walks (5.4 percent) to produce a high on-base percentage. He has gap power with enough pop to be dangerous at the top of the lineup. Arcia does most of his damage against fastballs and, therefore, sees lots of breaking pitches, which contributed to one skid in the middle of the season. Arcia rebounded from his slump to hit .300/.336/.451 with 24 extra-base hits, 17 steals and 40 strikeouts in his final 60 games. His swing still gets long at times, but he has become better at making adjustments as he matures as a hitter. He is a threat to steal at any time with plus speed on the basepaths. Arcia likes coming to the plate with games on the line, a sign of his growing confidence in his offensive game.

THE FUTURE: The rebuilding Brewers will establish Arcia's time line for reaching Milwaukee, but he will certainly be their starting shortstop at some time in the near future, and he has all-star potential. He could probably begin the 2016 season in the majors and hold his own, but the Brewers will take things slow unless they surprisingly find themselves in contention. With Jean Segura still manning shortstop in Milwaukee until further notice, Arcia probably will begin the 2016 season at Triple-A Colorado Springs, a hitter's haven. He could be the first homegrown impact player developed by the Brewers since Ryan Braun arrived in the majors in 2007.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Biloxi (AA)	.307	.347	.453	512	74	157	37	7	8	69	30	73	25

2. JORGE LOPEZ, RHP



BORN: Feb. 10, 1993. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 185. **DRAFTED:** HS—Gurabo, P.R., 2011 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Charlie Sullivan/Manolo Hernandez.

BACKGROUND: The Brewers have harbored high expectations for Lopez since making him a second-round pick in 2011, and he made progress at high Class A Brevard County in 2014. That was nothing compared with his breakthrough 2015 at Double-A Biloxi in which he won Southern League pitcher of the year honors. He led the league with 12 wins and a .205 opponent average, while ranking second in ERA (2.26) and third in strikeouts (137).

SCOUTING REPORT: Lopez throws three pitches for strikes, including a dynamic, high-70s curveball that he unleashes with plus downward tilt. He can spot the pitch in the zone or bury it as a chase pitch. Lopez's velocity has gradually increased since being drafted out of high school, and he now pitches at 92-94 mph and can reach back for 97 when needed. He allowed just nine home runs in 24 starts in 2015 because he locates down in the zone and has average control. His third pitch is an effective changeup that is deceptive because he repeats his delivery and arm slot.

THE FUTURE: Success breeds confidence, and Lopez displayed plenty of both in 2015, which he finished as a September callup after he went 2-1, 2.16 in three SL playoff starts. He will join the rotation at some point in the next two seasons and profiles as a No. 2 or 3 starter.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Biloxi (AA)	12	5	2.26	24	24	0	0	143	104	9	52	135	.205
Milwaukee (MLB)	1	1	5.40	2	2	0	0	10	14	0	5	10	.350

5. GILBERT LARA, SS



BORN: Oct. 30, 1997. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 205. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2014. **SIGNED BY:** Eduardo Bruzuela.

BACKGROUND: The Brewers dedicating their entire international budget to sign Lara for \$3.1 million in July 2014. He made a big impression in instructional league after signing, showing plus power, then embarked on an assignment to the Rookie-level Arizona League in 2015. He wore down in the second half and slumped noticeably in the AZL, where the 17-year-old tended to lose focus.

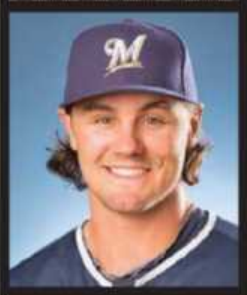
SCOUTING REPORT: Lara shortened his stroke in 2015 by concentrating on using his hands more, and not his entire body, to see

how far he could hit a ball. He has tremendous power potential if he can keep his swing quick and direct, but he hit only one home run in the AZL. Lara also must improve his plate discipline after recording a lopsided walk-to-strikeout ratio. He has no real speed on the bases and is not a threat to steal. Given Lara's tall, physical build, scouts have pegged him as a future third baseman, but the Brewers will play him at shortstop for as long as they can. He has the range, above-average arm and smooth actions to play shortstop, and he could stay there unless he goes through a growth spurt.

THE FUTURE: Given that Lara faded down the stretch in the AZL, the Brewers might push him only to Rookie-level Helena in 2016. That would require spending time in extended spring training, where motivation can be an issue, but Lara projects to be a bat-first player.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Arizona (R)	.248	.285	.332	202	29	50	4	5	1	25	9	41	3

8. CLINT COULTER, OF



BORN: July 30, 1993. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 215. **DRAFTED:** HS—Camas, Wash., 2012 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Shawn Whalen.

BACKGROUND: Selected as a high school catcher in the first round of the 2012 draft, Coulter shifted to right field in 2015 and hit brilliantly at high Class A Brevard County in April, when he recorded a 1.078 OPS with six homers. His production tailed off in May, however, and he hit .232 with seven homers the rest of the way when his swing got too long and pull-oriented. Even so, Coulter led the Florida State League with 46 extra-base hits and tied for third with 13 homers.

SCOUTING REPORT: Coulter has a somewhat unusual approach at the plate with an exaggerated load and powerful cut that at times gets him out of whack and long with his swing. But it also allows him to generate immense power, and hit mistakes a long way. He knows the strike zone and doesn't give an inch at the plate. Coulter failed to make enough defensive progress at catcher, so he took up the outfield in the 2014 Arizona Fall League. While his inexperience shows at times, his athleticism and strong arm—he recorded an FSL-leading 16 assists—should make him a playable right fielder. Speed is not a part of his game.

THE FUTURE: Coulter will move up to Double-A Biloxi in 2016 to continue his progress as a right fielder. The Brewers still believe his offensive skills will make him an impact player in the big leagues, though his path is blocked by Ryan Braun, who is signed through 2020.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Brevard County (Hi A)	.246	.329	.397	499	63	123	30	3	13	59	46	92	6

3. TRENT CLARK, OF



BILL MITCHELL

BORN: Nov. 1, 1996. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 205. **DRAFTED:** HS—North Richland Hills, Texas, 2015 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** K.J. Hendricks.

BACKGROUND: The Brewers were surprised to find Clark available at No. 15 in the 2015 draft. They ponied up \$2.7 million, the second-highest bonus in club history, to sign him away from Texas Tech. Clark ranked as the No. 1 prospect in the Rookie-level Arizona League, where his first pro season nearly ended in his second game after he crashed headfirst into the center-field wall chasing a flyball. Taken off the field in an ambulance, he escaped with a minor concussion and two black eyes.

SCOUTING REPORT: Clark has an unusual way of holding the bat, using more of a golf grip, but he makes it work. He is polished and mature for his age, showing bat speed, a real understanding of hitting and leadership skills. He understands the strike zone and is tough to whiff. At times, he can be too patient, but he became more aggressive as his debut progressed. Clark hit just two homers in 2015 but should develop power as he matures and gains experience. He is an above-average runner who steals bases with relative ease and shows plus range in center field. He adds accuracy to solid arm strength.

THE FUTURE: A potential five-tool talent, Clark looked so smooth in a 12-game trial at Rookie-level Helena that he probably will head to low Class A Wisconsin at the outset of 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Arizona (R)	.309	.422	.442	165	34	51	7	6	1	16	30	36	20
Helena (R)	.310	.431	.381	42	5	13	0	0	1	5	9	8	5

6 KODI MEDEIROS, LHP



BORN: May 25, 1996. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 180. **DRAFTED:** HS—Hilo, Hawaii, 2014 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Josh Belovsky.

BACKGROUND: Selected 12th overall in the 2014 draft, Medeiros pitched to a 7.13 ERA over 18 innings in the Rookie-level Arizona League after signing. The Brewers gambled that he could handle the jump to low Class A Wisconsin in 2015, and they were right. Medeiros struck out 9.1 batters per nine innings and allowed Midwest League opponents to hit just .228, though he pitched just 33 innings in the second half as the Brewers regulated his workload.

SCOUTING REPORT: Medeiros does not rely on pure velocity to succeed. He pitches mostly

in the low 90s but throws from a low arm angle and keeps the ball down consistently, as evidenced by the fact that he did not allow a home run in 93 innings. His fastball has good movement, life and sink, and he recorded an elite groundout-to-airout ratio of 3.14 that nearly led the MWL. Thanks in large part to an above-average slider, Medeiros is tough on lefthanded hitters, who hit just .191 against him. He also mixes in an improving changeup that has a chance to be an above-average pitch. He is very athletic and solidly built, in part due to his lifelong passion for judo, and repeats his low-slot mechanics well.

THE FUTURE: Many clubs believed that Medeiros would profile as a reliever because of his low arm slot. The Brewers believe his ability to induce groundball contact will keep him alive as a mid-rotation candidate, and he's ready for high Class A Brevard County in 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Wisconsin (Lo A)	4	5	4.44	25	16	0	1	93	79	0	40	94	.228

9. CODY PONCE, RHP



BORN: April 25, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-6. **WT.:** 240. **DRAFTED:** Cal Poly Pomona, 2015 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Josh Belovsky.

BACKGROUND: Ponce rocketed up draft boards in 2015, when the NCAA Division II Cal Poly Pomona junior ranked as one of the top college arms in his class. He first gained the attention of scouts in 2014 by sitting in the mid-90s as a reliever in the Cape Cold League. The Brewers snagged Ponce in the second round, and he put together a fine pro debut by reaching low Class A Wisconsin.

SCOUTING REPORT: The 6-foot-6 Ponce aggressively pounded the strike zone with high-octane stuff at Wisconsin, issuing few

walks while not shying away from contact. He has the size and four-pitch mix that scouts look for in a starter, including an explosive fastball in the mid-90s and an effective cutter he throws in the upper 80s that some scouts have called a slider. His fastball doesn't have much movement, but Ponce aggressively works both sides of the plate. He mixes in an erratic, 11-to-5 curveball and at times a changeup. He missed time early in his junior season with shoulder fatigue but profiles as a durable starter.

THE FUTURE: Because he pitched well in his debut, Ponce probably will begin 2016 at high Class A Brevard County. Some scouts consider him bullpen material, but the Brewers believe his repertoire and competitiveness will allow him to stay in the rotation.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Helena (R)	0	0	3.60	2	2	0	0	5	4	0	0	4	.222
Wisconsin (Lo A)	2	1	2.15	12	7	0	7	46	43	1	9	36	.246

4. BRETT PHILLIPS, OF



BORN: May 30, 1994. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 175. **DRAFTED:** HS—Seminole, Fla., 2012 (6th round). **SIGNED BY:** John Martin (Astros).

BACKGROUND: The Astros initially balked at the idea of including Phillips in a deal for Carlos Gomez, but Houston relented when the Brewers added Mike Fiers to the package. Phillips began the 2015 season at high Class A Lancaster, a noted hitter's haven, where he hit .320 with 15 home runs in 66 games, though his power dried up at the Double-A level, where he hit only one homer in 54 games.

SCOUTING REPORT: Whether Phillips hits for power or not, he projects as a disciplined, top-of-the-order hitter who recorded a .374

on-base percentage in 2015. He shows good bat speed with a level swing geared more for line drives than loft. He gets in trouble when trying to pull the ball too much, but the lefthanded hitter generally hits to the middle of the field and hangs in well versus southpaws. Phillips has the range and arm to play center field, and he probably will play there for the Brewers, based on team need. While not a prolific basestealer, he runs well and has good instincts.

THE FUTURE: Phillips suffered a bruised hand and thumb at Double-A Biloxi in the closing weeks of 2015, but he returned in time to hit .286 with five extra-base hits in eight games in the Southern League playoffs. He could open 2016 at Triple-A Colorado Springs.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Lancaster (Hi A)	.320	.379	.588	291	68	93	19	7	15	53	22	64	8
Corpus Christi (AA)	.321	.372	.463	134	22	43	8	4	1	18	8	26	7
Biloxi (AA)	.250	.361	.413	80	14	20	7	3	0	6	14	30	2

7 TYRONE TAYLOR, OF



BORN: Jan. 22, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 185. **DRAFTED:** HS—Torrance, Calif., 2012 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Dan Huston.

BACKGROUND: Taylor ranked as the system's No. 1 prospect a year ago after he paced the high Class A Florida State League with 36 doubles in 2014. He scuffled through an up-and-down 2015 season at Double-A Biloxi, however, as he tinkered with his swing and never got hot. He collected just 26 extra-base hits in 128 games and slugged .337 while beating the ball into the ground far too often.

SCOUTING REPORT: When at his best, Taylor drives the ball to the gaps and collects doubles.

The Brewers sought to encourage more home-

run production in 2015 by having Taylor stand more upright and stride into the ball, but his swing didn't always look comfortable in the Southern League. He is aggressive at the plate, often to a fault, drawing few walks but also limiting his strikeouts. He has decent speed on the bases but isn't a burner, nor is he a prolific basestealer, so he needs to continue to work on reading opposing pitchers. He is a true center fielder with good instincts and range and an average, accurate arm.

THE FUTURE: The athletic Taylor took a step backward in 2015, but he will still be just 22 when he repeats Biloxi in 2016. He needs to find a consistent offensive approach he is comfortable with and stick with it. His glove buys him time to develop his bat, but some rival clubs see him as an extra outfielder.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Biloxi (AA)	.260	.312	.337	454	48	114	20	3	3	43	31	55	10

10. DEVIN WILLIAMS, RHP



BORN: Sept. 21, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 175. **DRAFTED:** HS—Hazelwood, Mo., 2013 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Harvey Kuenn Jr.

BACKGROUND: Lacking a first-round pick in the 2013 draft, the Brewers made Williams the focal point of their class by choosing him with their top selection in the second round. He spent two seasons in Rookie ball before joining the low Class A Wisconsin rotation in mid-May 2015 after he worked through an arm issue in extended spring training. He improved as the season progressed and pitched to a 3.31 ERA in 14 second-half appearances, recording a 57-19 strikeout-to-walk ratio in 52 innings.

SCOUTING REPORT: Williams has a live, loose arm and free-and-easy delivery. As he fills out his lanky, 6-foot-3 frame, he could sit more comfortably in the upper registers of his 92-95 mph velocity range. His fastball features good movement and downward action. Williams mixes in a plus changeup with deception and downward movement and an improved slider in the mid-80s. He lost his release point at times at Wisconsin, resulting in 19 wild pitches, and his walk rate ticked up to 3.6 per nine innings. He continues to work on repeating his delivery to improve his control.

THE FUTURE: Williams had maturity issues at the outset of his career, so the Brewers have moved him cautiously, but he could be just a few small tweaks away from a breakthrough. He seems destined to begin 2016 at high Class A Brevard County as he reaches for a ceiling of mid-rotation starter.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Wisconsin (Lo A)	3	9	3.44	22	13	0	0	89	75	3	36	89	.226

PITTSBURGH PIRATES

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

General manager: Neal Huntington.
Farm director: Larry Broadway.
Scouting director: Joe DelliCarri.

FARM SYSTEM			
Classification	Affiliate	W	L
Triple-A	Indianapolis	83	61
Double-A	Altoona	74	68
High Class A	Bradenton	74	64
Low Class A	West Virginia	87	52
Short-Season	West Virginia	42	34
Rookie	Bristol	29	36
Rookie	GCL Pirates	28	31
OVERALL 2015 RECORD		417	346

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average	Harold Ramirez
Best Power Hitter	Willy Garcia
Best Strike-Zone Discipline	Kevin Newman
Fastest Baserunner	Alen Hanson
Best Athlete	Austin Meadows
Best Fastball	Tyler Glasnow
Best Curveball	Tyler Glasnow
Best Slider	Chad Kuhl
Best Changeup	Tyler Eppler
Best Control	Nick Kingham
Best Defensive Catcher	Reese McGuire
Best Defensive Infielder	Gift Ngoepe
Best Infield Arm	Wyatt Mathisen
Best Defensive Outfielder	Keon Broxton
Best Outfield Arm	Willy Garcia

PROJECTED 2019 LINEUP

Catcher	Reese McGuire
First Base	Josh Bell
Second Base	Kevin Newman
Third Base	Ke'Bryan Hayes
Shortstop	Cole Tucker
Left Field	Starling Marte
Center Field	Andrew McCutchen
Right Field	Gregory Polanco
No. 1 Starter	Gerrit Cole
No. 2 Starter	Tyler Glasnow
No. 3 Starter	Jameson Taillon
No. 4 Starter	Yeudy Garcia
No. 5 Starter	Nick Kingham
Closer	Arquimedes Caminero

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org
2006	Neil Walker, c	Pirates
2007	Andrew McCutchen, of	Pirates
2008	Andrew McCutchen, of	Pirates
2009	Pedro Alvarez, 3b	Pirates
2010	Pedro Alvarez, 3b	Pirates
2011	Jameson Taillon, rhp	Pirates
2012	Gerrit Cole, rhp	Pirates
2013	Gerrit Cole, rhp	Pirates
2014	Gregory Polanco, of	Pirates
2015	Tyler Glasnow, rhp	Pirates

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org
2006	Brad Lincoln, rhp	Pirates
2007	Daniel Moskos, lhp	Lancaster (Atlantic)
2008	Pedro Alvarez, 3b	Pirates
2009	Tony Sanchez, c	Pirates
2010	Jameson Taillon, rhp	Pirates
2011	Gerrit Cole, rhp	Pirates
2012	*Mark Appel, rhp	Astros
2013	Austin Meadows, of	Pirates
2014	Cole Tucker, ss	Pirates
2015	Kevin Newman, ss	Pirates

*Did not sign.

LARGEST BONUSES IN CLUB HISTORY

Gerrit Cole, 2011	\$8,000,000
Jameson Taillon, 2010	\$6,500,000
Pedro Alvarez, 2008	\$6,000,000
Josh Bell, 2011	\$5,000,000
Bryan Bullington, 2001	\$4,000,000

Pirates eye division crown in 2016

BY JOHN PERROTTO

The Pirates went 98-64 in 2015, finished with the second-best record in the major leagues and qualified for the postseason for a third consecutive year.

On the farm, four of the organization's seven domestic affiliates made the playoffs.

It was a seemingly a great year for a franchise that not all that long ago endured 20 consecutive losing seasons at the major league level from 1993 to 2012. That remains the record for sustained futility in major North American professional team sports.

Yet the Pirates walked away from 2015 feeling empty. Despite the 98 wins—their most since the 1991 team won the same number—they lost in the National League Wild Card Game for the second straight year, this time to the Cubs and Jake Arrieta, who threw a four-hit shutout.

While the Pirates had a marvelous season, they had the misfortune of playing in the NL Central, which also housed the Cardinals, who had the best record in the majors at 100-62, and the 97-win Cubs, who had the third-best record.

Despite their resurgence, the Pirates have not won a division title since 1992. So the organization's goal for 2016 is to figure out a way to win the Central outright and avoid the winner-take-all play-in game, which won't be an easy task with their division rivals also well-positioned for the future (and also more well-heeled).



Star Korean shortstop Jung-Ho Kang shined in his U.S. debut until a knee injury ended his season early

However, the Pirates will remain competitive with a solid core of players led by star center fielder Andrew McCutchen, who is under contract

through 2018 and flanked by a pair of potential stars in left fielder Starling Marte, who is signed through 2021 and right fielder Gregory Polanco, who is under club control through 2020.

Righthander Gerrit Cole has established himself as a No. 1 starter and, though the Scott Boras client will eventually become too expensive for the Pirates, cannot become a free agent until following the 2019 season.

General manager Neal Huntington also continues to show creativity in acquiring talent.

No one knew for sure what to expect when the Pirates signed 28-year-old shortstop Jung-Ho Kang, a star in the Korean major league, to a four-year, \$11 million contract in January.

However, Kang shined as the first native South Korean position player to make the jump directly from Korea Baseball Organization. He hit .287/.355/.461 with 15 home runs in 126 games while splitting time between third base and shortstop. Unfortunately, the Pirates lost him for the season on Sept. 17, when he suffered a devastating knee injury on a double-play pivot.

The Pirates have also been able to build playoff teams without sacrificing any of their premium prospects in trade. A strong farm system is headlined by righthander Tyler Glasnow and first baseman Josh Bell—who both figure to make their big league debuts in 2016—and 2013 first-round center fielder Austin Meadows, who will begin the season at Double-A Altoona as a 20-year-old.

TYLER GLASNOW, RHP

BORN: Aug. 23, 1993. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-8. **WT.:** 225. **DRAFTED:** HS—Santa Clarita, Calif., 2011 (5th round). **SIGNED BY:** Rick Allen.

BACKGROUND: Glasnow was lightly regarded as a late-blooming high school senior despite playing in heavily scouted Southern California. His fastball topped out in the low 90s back then, but he grew a foot during his career at Hart High, which has produced such major league pitchers as Bob Walk, James Shields and Trevor Bauer. The 6-foot-8 Glasnow gained the nickname "Baby Giraffe" because of his awkwardness, but the Pirates were enamored of his projectable body and signed him for an over-slot \$600,000 as a fifth-round pick in 2011, thus keeping him away from a scholarship to Portland. Glasnow comes from an athletic family. His mother is a former gymnastics coach at Cal State Northridge and starred collegiately at Cal State Fullerton, while his father and brother were both decathletes at Notre Dame. Glasnow has risen up the prospect charts in recent years and tops the Pirates' list for a second straight year despite missing a month in 2015 with a sprained ankle that he sustained while sliding into second base. He ranked as the No. 1 prospect in the high Class A Florida State League following the 2014 season and No. 4 in the Double-A Eastern League in 2015.

SCOUTING REPORT: Glasnow is a power pitcher with a fastball that touches 99 mph and sits in the 94-96 range. He also uses his long arms and legs to get on top of his delivery and drive his fastball down in the strike zone with good sinking action. Because of his long stride and long limbs, his fastball looks much faster as it approaches the batter. Opponents hit just .195 against him in

SCOUTING GRADES

FASTBALL: 70 **CHANGEUP:** 50.
CURVEBALL: 60. **CONTROL:** 50.

Based on 20-80 scouting scale—where 50 represents major league average—and future projection rather than present tools.

2015 and connected for just three homers in 22 starts. Glasnow complements his fastball with a power curveball that can be unhittable when he has command of it, though the pitch gets away from him at times. He has worked to develop his changeup, and it is improving, though it grades as a tick below-average at this point. As with all tall pitchers, Glasnow struggles to repeat his mechanics and release point, which costs him control and command at times. One area in which he still requires much work is holding baserunners. He has a slow, mechanical pickoff move to first base and is slow to the plate. As a result, 21 of 24 basestealers were successful against him in 2015. The Pirates consider him to be a quick learner and a hard worker.

THE FUTURE: Glasnow will begin the 2016 season at Triple-A Indianapolis, where he finished 2015 with a pair of playoff starts in which he struck out 13 in 11²/₃ innings. The Pirates would like him to continue to work on polishing his curveball and getting a better feel for his changeup. Glasnow has some command issues to iron out, too, but he will likely be in a line for a promotion to the big leagues by midseason—or September at the latest. He has the demeanor and stuff—including two plus pitches and an average third—to be a No. 1 starter in the major leagues and should eventually team with ace Gerrit Cole to give the Pirates an outstanding duo at the top of their rotation.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Indianapolis (AAA)	2	1	2.20	8	8	0	0	41	33	1	22	48	.220
Altoona (AA)	5	3	2.43	12	12	0	0	63	41	2	19	82	.182



**NO. 1
PROSPECT**

2. AUSTIN MEADOWS, OF



BORN: May 3, 1995. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** HS—Loganville, Ga., 2013 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Jerry Jordan. **BACKGROUND:** The Pirates selected Meadows ninth overall in the 2013 draft—using the pick they received as compensation for not signing Mark Appel in 2012—and signed him for \$3,029,600. Meadows' father played baseball at Morehead State and his mother played softball at Georgia Southern and Georgia State. Limited to 45 games in 2014 because of hamstring problems, he stayed healthy in 2015 and received a six-game promotion to Double-A Altoona as a 20-year-old.

SCOUTING REPORT: Meadows has an advanced approach to the game, especially when it comes to hitting. He has strong knowledge of the strike zone, understands what pitches he can handle and rarely gives away at-bats. Meadows has a compact lefthanded swing and hits the ball to all fields. He figures to add at least moderate power once he learns to more properly load his swing by putting more weight on his back side. He has above-average speed and good range in center field, though he needs to sharpen his angles to the ball. His arm grades as below-average.

THE FUTURE: Meadows will begin the 2016 season at Altoona and likely end it at Triple-A Indianapolis. He figures to make his major league debut in the latter part of 2017, though he faces a logjam behind an outfield of Starling Marte, Andrew McCutchen and Gregory Polanco.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Bradenton (Hi A)	.307	.357	.407	508	72	156	22	4	7	54	41	79	20
Altoona (AA)	.360	.429	.680	25	5	9	2	3	0	1	2	5	1

5. HAROLD RAMIREZ, OF

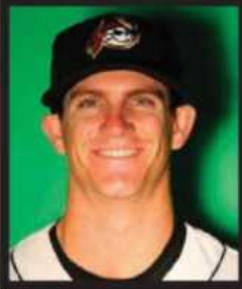


BORN: Sept. 6, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 5-10. **WT.:** 210. **SIGNED:** Colombia, 2011. **SIGNED BY:** Rene Guyo/Orlando Covo. **BACKGROUND:** Ramirez signed for \$1.05 million out of Colombia in 2011, for what was at the time the second-largest bonus given to a Latin American free agent by the Pirates behind the \$2.6 million that went to Mexican righthander Luis Heredia in 2010. Ramirez hit .337/.399/.458 in 80 games at high Class A Bradenton in 2015—and owns a career .304 average—but he has been hampered by various lower-body injuries, including a severely strained hamstring and shin splints.

SCOUTING REPORT: Ramirez can hit. He uses the whole field and makes consistently hard contact. He is also willing to take a walk, though he steps in the batter's box intent on hitting line drives. Ramirez does not drive the ball much despite his thick build, but his power production should improve as he continues to gain experience. Despite his physical stature, Ramirez plays a good center field, though he could wind up in left if he gets heavier. His arm is not strong enough to profile in right. Ramirez has above-average speed and is willing to take risks on the basepaths, though he tends to run into too many outs at this point in his career. A lack of overall focus can be a problem at times. **THE FUTURE:** Ramirez will start the 2016 season at Double-A Altoona, where he will be challenged by more advanced pitchers. Only injuries have slowed him to this point, and he is on pace to reach the big leagues in 2018.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Bradenton (Hi A)	.337	.399	.458	306	45	103	13	6	4	47	25	48	22

8. KEVIN NEWMAN, SS



BORN: Aug. 4, 1993. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 180. **DRAFTED:** Arizona, 2015 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Derrick Van Dusen. **BACKGROUND:** Newman made his mark when he became the first player ever to win back-to-back batting titles in the Cape Cod League, following his freshman and sophomore seasons at Arizona. He then hit .370 for the Wildcats in 2015 to position himself as a first-round talent. He signed for \$2.175 million as the 19th overall pick after going undrafted as a high school player in Poway, Calif. Newman's mother was a professional skier while his father and two sisters played tennis at the NCAA Division I level.

SCOUTING REPORT: Newman is a high-average hitter, though he hit just .257 in 257 at-bats in his pro debut. He has good hand-eye coordination, is willing to hit the ball to all fields and is particularly adept at situational hitting. Newman has below-average power, but his ability to make contact and draw walks make him a potential table-setter. The Pirates believe Newman will be able to stay at shortstop, but his average range and arm could lead to a move to second base. He is an average runner with very good instincts on the bases.

THE FUTURE: Newman figures to begin 2016 at high Class A Bradenton and end it at Double-A Altoona. He could arrive in Pittsburgh at some point in 2018, though it is too early to tell at which position.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
West Virginia (SS)	.226	.281	.340	159	25	36	10	1	2	9	10	22	7
West Virginia (Lo A)	.306	.376	.367	98	14	30	4	1	0	8	9	8	6

3. JOSH BELL, 1B



BORN: Aug. 14, 1992. **B-T:** B-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 235. **DRAFTED:** HS—Dallas, 2011 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Mike Leuzinger. **BACKGROUND:** Bell asked teams not to draft him during his senior year of high school in 2011 because he was intent on furthering his education and playing ball at Texas. However, the Pirates selected him with the first pick in the second round and signed him for \$5 million. Bell's career got off to a slow start when he suffered a serious knee injury early in 2012, but he bounced back to win MVP honors in the high Class A Florida State League in 2014 and finish 2015 at Triple-A Indianapolis.

SCOUTING REPORT: Though he is strong and athletic, Bell has yet to fully tap into his plus power potential. The switch-hitter makes contact and manages the strike zone from both side of the plate, though he hits for much more power from the left side (.470 slugging since 2012) and doesn't use his legs enough from the right (.409). Adding a leg kick in July helped him drive the ball more consistently. He is a decent runner for a big man. Bell made the transition from right field to first base in 2015. He worked hard to improve but struggled with his footwork and led Eastern League first baseman with 13 errors. Despite having a strong arm, he is tentative to make throws.

THE FUTURE: Bell will continue learning the nuances of first base, and with the Pirates having no long-term answer at the position, he could take over the job in 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Altoona (AA)	.307	.376	.427	368	47	113	17	6	5	60	44	50	7
Indianapolis (AAA)	.347	.441	.504	121	20	42	7	3	2	18	21	15	2

6. REESE MCGUIRE, C



BORN: March 2, 1995. **B-T:** L-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 181. **DRAFTED:** HS—Covington, Wash., 2013 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Greg Hopkins. **BACKGROUND:** McGuire was considered the top catcher in the 2013 draft, and the Pirates selected him at No. 14 with their second of two first-round picks. He signed for \$2,369,000, which was \$200,000 under the recommended slot value. He advanced to high Class A Bradenton in 2015, where his defensive value continued to outstrip his offensive output. He has hit .258/.304/.315 in nearly 200 games at the Class A level.

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense is McGuire's calling card. He is an outstanding receiver with soft hands and an extraordinary ability to frame pitches and steal strikes for his pitchers. He is mobile behind the plate, has an above-average arm and an advanced feel for working with a pitching staff. However, McGuire needs to improve his offense. Though he has a pretty lefthanded swing, he generates little power, and he particularly struggles against lefthanders. He is a good athlete, which not only helps him behind the plate, but makes him a threat on the bases. He easily led Florida State League catchers with 14 stolen bases in 2015.

THE FUTURE: McGuire is ready to play in the major leagues right now from a defensive standpoint. He will begin the 2016 season at Double-A Altoona after a stint in the Arizona Fall League, and if his hitting ever catches up to his defense, he could be the starter in Pittsburgh by 2018.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Bradenton (Hi A)	.254	.301	.294	374	32	95	15	0	0	34	26	39	14

9. KE'BRYAN HAYES, 3B



BORN: Jan. 28, 1997. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 210. **DRAFTED:** HS—Tomball, Texas, 2015 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Tyler Stohr. **BACKGROUND:** Hayes is the son of former big league third baseman Charlie Hayes, a 14-year veteran who spent 1996 with the Pirates. A Tennessee recruit, Ke'Bryan boosted his draft stock by dropping 20 pounds before his senior year of high school with a daily regimen of mountain-bike riding and swimming. The Pirates made him a first-round pick in 2015 and signed him for \$1,855,000. Hayes also pitched in high school, but big league teams liked his bat better.

SCOUTING REPORT: Hayes shows outstanding power potential in batting practice but doesn't carry it over to games, where he concentrates more on making contact rather than turning the bat loose. He did not hit a home run during his pro debut, but his power figures to develop as he gains experience and becomes more aggressive. Hayes has a good eye for a young hitter and doesn't chase many pitches outside the strike zone. He is a solid defensive third baseman with good agility and a plus arm. However, he will need to stay in shape to stay at third base or else face a move to first. **THE FUTURE:** Hayes is advanced enough to move to a full-season league in 2016, when he figures to begin at low Class A West Virginia and be one of the youngest players in the South Atlantic League at 19.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
GCL Pirates (R)	.333	.434	.375	144	24	48	4	1	0	13	22	24	7
West Virginia (SS)	.220	.320	.244	41	8	9	1	0	0	7	6	7	1

4. JAMESON TAILLON, RHP



BORN: Nov. 18, 1991. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-5. **WT.:** 240. **DRAFTED:** HS—The Woodlands, Texas, 2010 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Trevor Haley. **BACKGROUND:** Taillon, the second overall pick in the 2010 draft, has missed the past two seasons because of injuries, though he finally took the mound again in instructional league games at the end of 2015. He had Tommy John surgery in April 2014, and the Pirates placed him on a cautious, deliberate rehab program. Taillon then suffered a season-ending sports hernia in what was to be his last of five starts in extended spring training before being assigned to Triple-A Indianapolis in 2015.

SCOUTING REPORT: Though it has betrayed him in recent years, Taillon has the requisite pitcher's build and is tall and powerful. When healthy, he possessed two outstanding pitches in a high-90s fastball that bores in on righthanded hitters and a hammer curveball with a 12-to-6 break. He has worked hard to perfect a changeup, though he hasn't had as many repetitions the past two seasons. Though Taillon stays in good shape, it is fair to question his durability going forward after sitting out two years.

THE FUTURE: Taillon has the ability to be a top-of-the-rotation starter if he can stay healthy. He finished 2013 with six starts at Indianapolis and will start 2016 at Triple-A, with an eye toward making his big league debut at some point, though there is no way of knowing how he will rebound following such a long layoff.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Did Not Pitch—Injured													

7. COLE TUCKER, SS



BORN: July 3, 1996. **B-T:** B-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 185. **DRAFTED:** HS—Phoenix, 2014 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Mike Steele. **BACKGROUND:** The Pirates raised eyebrows when they used the 24th overall pick in 2014 to select Tucker, whom they signed for \$1.8 million. Many teams had him turned in as a third-round talent, but the Pirates followed Tucker closely because his summer-league coach was former Pittsburgh first baseman Kevin Young, now a special assistant with the organization. Tucker tore the labrum in his right shoulder in August 2015 and could miss most or all of 2016, though he might be able to take part in instructional league.

SCOUTING REPORT: Tucker, despite his 6-foot-3 frame, is a pure shortstop with good range and instincts and a strong arm, though there is no way of knowing exactly how much shoulder surgery will affect his throwing. Tucker has good hand-eye coordination and contract skills as a hitter, and the switch-hitter figures to add at least moderate power as he matures. He is a plus runner with good baserunning instincts. Tucker draws high marks for his intangibles and leadership skills. He has an outstanding feel for the game and is bright, personable and mature for his age.

THE FUTURE: Tucker does not turn 20 until July 2016 and already has batted 300 times in a full-season league, so missing next season should not be a crushing setback to his development. He figures to begin 2017 at high Class A Bradenton.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
West Virginia (Lo A)	.293	.322	.377	300	46	88	13	3	2	25	16	49	25

10. ELIAS DIAZ, C



BORN: Nov. 17, 1990. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-0. **WT.:** 210. **SIGNED:** Venezuela, 2009. **SIGNED BY:** Rene Gayo/Rodolfo Petit. **BACKGROUND:** Mimicking his older brother, Diaz first began catching when he was 5 years old in Venezuela and has never had any desire to move out from behind the plate. Managers singled him out as the best defensive catcher in the high Class A Florida State League in 2013, the Double-A Eastern League in 2014 and the Triple-A International League in 2015. He made his big league debut with two pinch-hitting appearances as a September callup in 2015.

SCOUTING REPORT: Long considered a good-field, no-hit catcher, Diaz has worked hard to become competent offensively. He has developed moderate gap power and makes contact much more consistently than he did in the low minors. Defense, though, is Diaz's strength. He frames pitches well with his soft hands and deters baserunners with his strong arm. Diaz has also learned to speak English well, enabling him to communicate with his pitchers.

THE FUTURE: Diaz finished 2015 in Pittsburgh, receiving a September callup from Triple-A Indianapolis instead of 2009 first-rounder Tony Sanchez. That is a strong indication that Diaz will begin the 2016 season as Francisco Cervelli's backup in the majors, and he could be ready to start in 2017.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Indianapolis (AAA)	.271	.330	.382	325	33	88	16	4	4	47	29	47	1
Pittsburgh (MLB)	.000	.000	.000	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

General manager: John Mozeliak.
Farm director: Gary LaRocque.
Scouting director: Randy Flores.

FARM SYSTEM

Classification	Affiliate	W	L
Triple-A	Memphis	73	71
Double-A	Springfield	64	76
High Class A	Palm Beach	75	63
Low Class A	Peoria	75	63
Short-season	State College	41	35
Rookie	Johnson City	27	38
Rookie	GCL Cardinals	34	25
OVERALL 2015 RECORD		389	371

BEST TOOLS

Best Hitter for Average	Nick Plummer
Best Power Hitter	Paul DeJong
Best Strike-Zone Discipline	Mike O'Neill
Fastest Baserunner	Magneuris Sierra
Best Athlete	Magneuris Sierra
Best Fastball	Alex Reyes
Best Curveball	Alex Reyes
Best Slider	Luis Perdomo
Best Changeup	Marco Gonzales
Best Control	Matt Pearce
Best Defensive Catcher	Carson Kelly
Best Defensive Infielder	Greg Garcia
Best Infield Arm	Robelys Reyes
Best Defensive Outfielder	Magneuris Sierra
Best Outfield Arm	Magneuris Sierra

PROJECTED 2019 LINEUP

Catcher	Carson Kelly
First Base	Stephen Piscotty
Second Base	Kolten Wong
Third Base	Matt Carpenter
Shortstop	Edmundo Sosa
Left Field	Tommy Pham
Center Field	Magneuris Sierra
Right Field	Randal Grichuk
No. 1 Starter	Alex Reyes
No. 2 Starter	Michael Wacha
No. 3 Starter	Carlos Martinez
No. 4 Starter	Lance Lynn
No. 5 Starter	Tim Cooney
Closer	Trevor Rosenthal

TOP PROSPECTS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org
2006	Anthony Reyes, rhp	Out of baseball
2007	Colby Rasmus, of	Astros
2008	Colby Rasmus, of	Astros
2009	Colby Rasmus, of	Astros
2010	Shelby Miller, rhp	Braves
2011	Shelby Miller, rhp	Braves
2012	Shelby Miller, rhp	Braves
2013	Oscar Taveras, of	Deceased
2014	Oscar Taveras, of	Deceased
2015	Marco Gonzales, lhp	Cardinals

TOP DRAFT PICKS OF THE DECADE

Year	Player, Pos.	2015 Org
2006	Adam Ottavino, rhp	Rockies
2007	Peter Kozma, ss	Cardinals
2008	Brett Wallace, 3b	Padres
2009	Shelby Miller, rhp	Braves
2010	Zack Cox, 3b	Marlins
2011	Kolten Wong, 2b	Cardinals
2012	Michael Wacha, rhp	Cardinals
2013	Marco Gonzales, lhp	Cardinals
2014	Luke Weaver, rhp	Cardinals
2015	Nick Plummer, of	Cardinals

LARGEST BONUSES IN CLUB HISTORY

J.D. Drew, 1998	\$3,000,000
Shelby Miller, 2009	\$2,875,000
Rick Ankiel, 1997	\$2,500,000
Chad Hutchinson, 1998	\$2,300,000
Nick Plummer, 2015	\$2,124,000

Strong season ends on sour note

BY JOHN MANUEL

Cardinals fans experienced the best regular-season team in baseball in 2015, in the tradition of the game's most consistent organization.

St. Louis reached the playoffs for the sixth time in seven seasons, winning the National League Central for the third straight season and winning 100 games for the first time in a decade—the first team in the majors to reach the century mark since 2011.

And yet, the Cardinals team that faced the rival Cubs in the NL Division Series was not the same team that won the division. Not quite.

Left fielder Matt Holliday missed half the season with a quad injury and wasn't himself. Catcher Yadier Molina, with a ligament injury in his left thumb, did not start the elimination game of the NLDS. And instead of having Carlos Martinez, the pitching staff's hardest thrower and strikeout leader, to pitch the do-or-die Game Four, the Cardinals turned to 36-year-old ace John Lackey, working on short rest.

St. Louis fought gamely but lost the series in four games, the earliest ending to a Cardinals season since 2010. By any measure, though, manager Mike Matheny's fourth season has to be considered a success.

Matheny steered the team without former top prospect Oscar Taveras, who died in an offseason car accident in the Dominican Republic. Trading



Randal Grichuk played all three outfield positions and ranked second on the club with 17 homers

DAVID SEELIG

cased the outfield depth to replace the impending free agent, with rookies Randal Grichuk (second on the team with 17 home runs) Tommy Pham and Stephen Piscotty all contributing. Lefthander Tim Cooney also provided solid production over six big league starts before an appendectomy ended his season prematurely.

St. Louis doesn't have a pressing need for big league pitchers, despite having to replace free agent Lackey. The organization's goals include finding long-term replacements for Molina and shortstop Jhonny Peralta. Both are 33 and signed through 2017. Aside from the glove-first Brendan Ryan and Pete Kozma, marginal regulars at their peaks, the Cardinals haven't developed a homegrown regular at shortstop since Garry Templeton in the mid-1970s.

That was not the motivation for a second scouting-director change in two seasons, though. St. Louis had promoted Chris Correa internally from its baseball development department in December, and he oversaw a classic Cardinals draft that intermingled high-ceiling high school picks and polished college bats.

But in July, general manager John Mozeliak fired Correa in the wake of a federal investigation into whether the Cardinals illegally hacked into the personnel database of the Astros, whose GM Jeff Luhnow left the Cardinals in 2011. St. Louis hired Randy Flores, who pitched for the club as recently as 2008 but has no formal scouting experience, as scouting director in August.

Shelby Miller to the Braves in a four-player deal yielded new right fielder Jason Heyward, who starred in all phases. The Cardinals also show-

ALEX REYES, RHP

BORN: Aug. 29, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 185.
SIGNED: Dominican Republic, 2012.
SIGNED BY: Rodny Jimenez/Angel Ovalles.

BACKGROUND: Born and raised in Elizabeth, N.J., Reyes was a prospect as a teenager playing high school ball in the Garden State. However, after his junior year in high school, he moved to the Dominican Republic to live with his grandmother, enabling him to become an international free agent and develop more as a pitcher than as an infielder. The Royals were considered the front-runner for Reyes before the Cardinals signed him for \$950,000 in December 2012, heading up a signing class that also included Dominican outfielder Magneuris Sierra and Panamanian shortstop Edmundo Sosa. Reyes began 2015, his third pro season, by missing part of spring training recovering from dental surgery before he reported to high Class A Palm Beach. He missed time (as well as the Futures Game) with a sore shoulder in late June and early July before finishing strong at Double-A Springfield.

SCOUTING REPORT: At his best, Reyes features closer stuff for six and seven innings at a time, with two pitches grading as at least double-plus. He makes throwing 100 mph look easy, and he does it regularly. He usually sits in the 96-97 mph range, and his fastball is difficult to square up and heavy when it's down. He allowed only one home run in 22 starts in 2015, and his career rate is just 0.3 per nine innings. Hitters can't sit on Reyes' fastball because of his much-improved breaking ball. It's a true hammer of a 12-to-6 curveball thrown with power that at times earns double-plus grades from scouts as well, and it has sharp, late break. It's the pitch he struggles to locate the most, though, and

SCOUTING GRADES

FASTBALL: 80. **CHANGEUP:** 50.
CURVEBALL: 65. **CONTROL:** 45.

Based on 20-80 scouting scale and future projection rather than present grades.

is generally a chase pitch at this stage. His changeup ranked ahead of his breaking ball when he signed, and it remains a strong pitch for him, flashing plus and sitting in the upper 80s. Reyes' fastball command could be better, and his delivery isn't perfect. He throws across his body a bit, but he lands under control, repeats his delivery fairly well and has a fairly sound arm action. So even though he walked 4.4 batters per nine innings in 2015, most scouts don't see red flags in his delivery that preclude him from throwing enough strikes to remain a starter. Reyes excels at missing bats (13.4 strikeouts per nine innings) and allowing weak contact (.197 opponent average), and he yields more groundballs than flyballs. He's a solid athlete who holds runners well for his age and experience level.

THE FUTURE: Reyes is a bigger, stronger, but slightly less athletic version of Cardinals starter Carlos Martinez. If St. Louis needed him in the bullpen in the short term, then Reyes could provide St. Louis with a Dellin Betances imitation, but his power arm is harder to find in a rotation. Reyes isn't ready—big league starters don't walk as many batters as he does—and he appears destined to head back to Springfield to start 2016. He should see time at Triple-A Memphis as well. Reyes may not be far from Busch Stadium, where he eventually should be the ace for a contender, and if his command improves, he profiles as a true No. 1 starter.



MIKE JAMES

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Palm Beach (Hi A)	2	5	2.26	13	13	0	0	64	49	0	31	96	.216
Springfield (AA)	3	2	3.12	8	8	0	0	35	21	1	18	52	.174

2. TIM COONEY, LHP



BORN: Dec. 19, 1990. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-3. **WT.:** 195. **DRAFTED:** Wake Forest, 2012 (3rd round). **SIGNED BY:** Matt Blood.

BACKGROUND: A native of suburban Philadelphia, Cooney attended the Phillies' 2008 World Series championship parade and grew up a fan of Cole Hamels, honing his changeup along the way. After three work-horse seasons at Wake Forest, he made a fairly rapid ascent up the Cardinals' ladder, finishing 2014, his first full season, at Double-A Springfield before making his big league debut in 2015.

SCOUTING REPORT: Hit hard in his first big league start in April, Cooney adjusted when he

got back to St. Louis, locating his solid-average 89-92 mph fastball, which has some sink and late life, to both sides of the plate. He's willing to pitch inside to batters from both sides of the plate and uses his above-average changeup to get swings and misses. Cooney started to mix in a low-80s slider and slightly harder cutter to go with his mid-70s curveball, and his mound savvy helps all five of his pitches play up. An appendectomy that ended his season in late July shouldn't be a long-term factor.

THE FUTURE: Cooney would have exhausted his rookie eligibility if not for his appendectomy, but he didn't have enough time to rebuild his arm to get back into meaningful games. He has a shot to open 2016 in the big league rotation and profiles as a durable No. 4 starter.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Memphis (AAA)	6	4	2.74	14	14	1	0	89	61	9	16	63	.195
St. Louis (MLB)	1	0	3.16	6	6	0	0	31	28	3	10	29	.241

3. JACK FLAHERTY, RHP



PAUL GIERHART

BORN: Oct. 15, 1995. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-4. **WT.:** 205. **DRAFTED:** HS—Studio City, Calif., 2014 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Mike Garciparra.

BACKGROUND: Flaherty was a sophomore third baseman at Harvard-Westlake High when teammates Max Fried (Padres) and Lucas Giolito (Nationals) were 2012 first-round picks. He added pitching duties the next spring to help replace them, and though he was committed to North Carolina to play third and pitch, the Cardinals loved him on the mound. He joined Fried and Giolito in becoming a first-round pick and signed for \$2 million in 2014.

SCOUTING REPORT: Flaherty is more polish than stuff and has excellent pitchability despite his modest experience level. He pounds all areas of the strike zone with a 90-92 mph fastball and projects to have above-average command, with advanced present control. He has shown the ability to manipulate the movement on his fastball as well, cutting it or giving it run or sink, and he maintained his velocity better as the year progressed. Flaherty's best secondary pitch, a changeup, earned some future double-plus grades when he was an amateur, though it was more above-average in his first full pro season in 2015. He'll have to tighten his slurve breaking ball, but he throws it for strikes.

THE FUTURE: If Flaherty's velocity improves, he has a chance to be a front-line starter. If not, he still has the pitch mix and command to pitch in the middle of a rotation. He'll move up to high Class A Palm Beach for 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Peoria (Lo A)	9	3	2.84	18	18	0	0	95	92	2	31	97	.251

4. LUKE WEAVER, RHP



SCOTT ROVAK / ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

BORN: Aug. 21, 1993. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 170. **DRAFTED:** Florida State, 2014 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Charlie Gonzalez.

BACKGROUND: Weaver developed into Florida State's ace as a sophomore, earning a spot on USA Baseball's star-studded 2013 Collegiate National Team that included Carlos Rodon, Kyle Schwarber and Michael Conforto, among others. His fastball backed up a bit as a junior, but he still pitched his way into the first round, signing for \$1,843,000, then started five combined shutouts in his first pro season.

SCOUTING REPORT: Weaver earns Tim Hudson body comps, but he pitches more like Jered Weaver (unrelated) as a flyball pitcher.

At high Class A Palm Beach in 2015, he took advantage of Roger Dean Stadium, pounding the strike zone with a 92-93 mph fastball that can bump 96 on his best days. Weaver pitches aggressively off his fastball, which earns above-average grades. His above-average changeup has good sink at times as well, though he needs to locate it better. He has improved his curveball to be a solid-average pitch at times, and it's more consistent than his slider. Both breaking balls play up because he throws them for strikes. A fine athlete, he fields his position and holds runners very well.

THE FUTURE: If Weaver hadn't shown up to spring training less than ready to go, he likely would have moved quicker up the ladder. He'll start 2016 in the Double-A Springfield rotation but could move quickly if the Cardinals need the pitching depth.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Palm Beach (Hi A)	8	5	1.62	19	19	0	0	105	98	2	19	88	.247

5. MARCO GONZALES, LHP



BORN: Feb. 16, 1992. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 195. **DRAFTED:** Gonzaga, 2013 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Matt Swanson.

BACKGROUND: A prep star who won four state championship games for Rocky Mountain High in Fort Collins, Colo., Gonzales was a two-way All-American at Gonzaga who reached the majors at the end of his first full season, even going 2-1 during the 2014 postseason. However, two bouts of shoulder soreness/weakness, neither of which required surgery, conspired to sap Gonzales' stuff limit him to 14 starts at Triple-A Memphis in 2015.

SCOUTING REPORT: Gonzales wasn't at his best in 2015, either in terms of velocity or

command, and his lack of margin for error was exposed. Even at his best, he pitches with an average 88-91 mph fastball that he must locate with precision to set up his go-to pitch, a circle changeup that has earned double-plus grades at its best. Gonzales plays it off his sinker at times or complements it with a solid, if a bit slow, low- to mid-70s curveball with good depth. He is a fine athlete who repeats his delivery well when he's at full strength. All his stuff was flatter and less lively for much of 2015, leaving him quite hittable.

THE FUTURE: Strength and conditioning in the offseason will be crucial for Gonzales to reclaim a spot on the Cardinals' depth chart, and he's fallen behind Tim Cooney, with Alex Reyes gaining quickly. He still has a shot to be a No. 4 starter if he regains his past firmness.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
Memphis (AAA)	1	5	5.45	14	14	0	0	69	91	10	24	51	.323
St. Louis (MLB)	0	0	13.50	1	1	0	0	3	7	1	1	1	.500

6. MAGNEURIS SIERRA, OF



SCOTT ROVAK / ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

BORN: April 7, 1996. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 5-11. **WT.:** 160. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2012. **SIGNED BY:** Rodney Jimenez/Angel Ovalles.

BACKGROUND: The Cardinals' 2012 international signing class produced three of their Top 10 Prospects, including No. 1 Alex Reyes and Sierra, who signed for \$105,000. He dominated the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League in his U.S. debut in 2014 but struggled significantly with a jump to low Class A Peoria in 2015 before regaining momentum following a demotion to Rookie-level Johnson City.

SCOUTING REPORT: Sierra plays with a confidence that wasn't significantly shaken even after hitting .191 in 51 Midwest League

games. He's a top-of-the-scale runner and pure center fielder who has the effortless range to cover both gaps. He also has a plus arm. Sierra has added strength and is no slap hitter, with a short, compact swing and gap power. His raw offensive approach left him often swinging at pitcher's pitches, and he must improve his pitch recognition to reach his ceiling as an above-average hitter. His speed could allow him to boost his average with infield hits and make him a premium basestealer, though his jumps and instincts need development.

THE FUTURE: Among position players, Sierra fits a first-division regular's profile better than any Cardinals farmhand. If it all works out, he'll be a Gold Glove center fielder and table-setting leadoff hitter. He'll return to Peoria in 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Peoria (Lo A)	.191	.219	.247	178	19	34	1	3	1	7	7	52	4
Johnson City (R)	.315	.371	.394	216	38	68	8	0	3	15	19	42	15

7. EDMUNDO SOSA, SS



SCOTT ROVAK / ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

BORN: March 6, 1996. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 5-11. **WT.:** 170. **SIGNED:** Panama, 2012. **SIGNED BY:** Arquimedes Nieto.

BACKGROUND: Sosa's \$425,000 bonus was the largest for a Panamanian player in 2012 and the third-largest in St. Louis' fruitful 2012 international signing class, fronted by Alex Reyes. The Cardinals have moved Sosa slowly despite good present hitting ability, which allowed him to earn a postseason all-star nod in the Rookie-level Appalachian League after he hit .300 with seven homers at Johnson City in 2015.

SCOUTING REPORT: An offense-first shortstop, Sosa started slowing the game down on

both sides of the ball, improving his strike-zone judgment and consistency of his at-bats and preparation. He has an above-average arm and enough range for shortstop along with good footwork. He has the instincts, body control and leadership qualities to stick at the position, where his bat would make him a real asset. Sosa has a chance to hit for average power down the road and has added polish to his offensive approach. He's an average runner with sound baserunning instincts.

THE FUTURE: While his body lacks much projection, Sosa has a chance to have average tools across the board and to play a premium position, which could make him one of the Cardinals' most valuable prospects in the end. He's the system's latest best hope for a homegrown shortstop, and he will make his full-season debut at low Class A Peoria in 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Johnson City (R)	.300	.369	.485	200	30	60	8	4	7	16	16	38	6

8. NICK PLUMMER, OF



CLIFF WELCH

BORN: July 31, 1996. **B-T:** L-L. **HT.:** 5-10. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** HS—Bloomfield Hills, Mich., 2015 (1st round). **SIGNED BY:** Jason Bryans.

BACKGROUND: Michigan's prep ranks have produced the likes of Hall of Famer John Smoltz and future Cooperstown immortal Derek Jeter, but Plummer in 2015 became the first Michigan prep picked in the first round since Ryan Anderson (1997) and the first position player since Jeter ('92). He did so despite a bout of mononucleosis in the spring that helped push him to St. Louis at No. 23, but he signed for \$2,124,400, the fifth-largest draft bonus in franchise history.

SCOUTING REPORT: Despite his background, Plummer stands out as a polished hitter with an advanced approach. For example, he led the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League with 39 walks (and 43 runs scored) in his debut. That approach stood out in the summer of 2014 on the showcase circuit, where his above-average bat speed, short swing and pitch recognition helped him dominate some of the best arms in the 2015 draft class. Plummer will have to keep adjusting to advanced velocity and breaking balls, but he has the skills to hit for both average and power. He must work hard to maintain his body and slightly above-average speed to have a chance to stick in center field, and his below-average arm means his fallback position is left field.

THE FUTURE: The first first-round high school hitter St. Louis has drafted since Pete Kozma in 2007, Plummer may hit his way to an assignment at low Class A Peoria in 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
GCL Cardinals (R)	.228	.379	.344	180	43	41	8	5	1	22	39	56	8

9. JUNIOR FERNANDEZ, RHP



CLIFF WELCH

BORN: March 2, 1997. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-1. **WT.:** 180. **SIGNED:** Dominican Republic, 2014. **SIGNED BY:** Rodney Jimenez.

BACKGROUND: Like Alex Reyes, Fernandez signed out of the Dominican Republic but has roots in the U.S. He lived in Miami and Port St. Lucie, Fla., attended Miami's Varela High and played prep baseball before his entire family moved back to the D.R. in April 2013. He signed a year later for \$400,000 and pitched well enough to finish his first full pro season at high Class A Palm Beach.

SCOUTING REPORT: The Cardinals had Fernandez "jump the fence" from their Rookie-level Gulf Coast League team to Palm Beach

because of his fastball, one of the best in the system. Multiple reports have Fernandez reaching 100 mph thanks to his fast arm and twitchy athleticism. He's still raw, though he's much more controlled in his delivery now than he was prior to signing, and he has improved his feel for the strike zone. Fernandez's changeup flashes plus thanks to its excellent late tumble, with some scouts giving it future double-plus grades. His slider is his third-best pitch but has short break and enough tilt to be a solid-average breaking ball.

THE FUTURE: Fernandez has a starter's pitch mix and athleticism with a reliever's energy and aggressiveness. The Cardinals will give him every chance to start, though, and if he continues to refine his delivery, he could dominate at low Class A Peoria in 2016.

2015 Club (Class)	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SV	IP	H	HR	BB	SO	AVG
GCL Cardinals (R)	3	2	3.88	11	9	0	0	51	54	0	15	58	.274
Palm Beach (Hi A)	0	0	1.35	2	1	0	0	7	8	0	2	5	.308

10. CARSON KELLY, C



SCOTT ROVAK / ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

BORN: July 14, 1994. **B-T:** R-R. **HT.:** 6-2. **WT.:** 200. **DRAFTED:** HS—Portland, Ore., 2012 (2nd round). **SIGNED BY:** Matt Swanson.

BACKGROUND: Kelly was drafted and signed for an above-slot \$1.6 million in 2012 as a third baseman before the Cardinals decided to shift him behind the plate prior to the 2014 season. He struggled through most of 2015 before a hitting five home runs and 10 doubles in his final 48 games. His younger brother Parker was drafted in 2015 by the Cardinals but didn't sign and is attending Oregon.

SCOUTING REPORT: Kelly's glove is ahead of his bat, and he picked up plenty of pointers in spring training when he spent time in big

league camp learning from manager Mike Matheny and Yadier Molina. Kelly has an above-average arm that plays up thanks to his accuracy, and he threw out 36 percent of basestealers in 2015. He's a solid receiver with good hands who handles velocity well. At the plate, Kelly adjusted after being overmatched most of the season and started driving the ball more in the second half, using the whole field more. He uses a strength-based swing, and he needs to keep working to improve his approach, balancing between aggression and working more walks. He's a poor runner.

THE FUTURE: A backup catcher at worst if he continues to develop, Kelly has defenders in the organization who believe his bat will develop. He'll move up to Double-A Springfield in 2016 and has a clear path to become Molina's successor—if he hits enough.

2015 Club (Class)	AVG	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Palm Beach (Hi A)	.219	.263	.332	389	30	85	18	1	8	51	22	64	0

Sanchez grows with both bat, glove

NEW YORK | Yankees

BY GEORGE KING



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: baseballamerica.com/t/organization-reports/

NEW YORK Gary Sanchez's solid 2015 season is still going strong.

The 22-year-old catcher began the season at Double-A Trenton, moved to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and appeared in two big league games over the final two weeks.

Sanchez hit .274/.330/.485 with 18 homers and 62 RBIs in 93 minor league games, and only slugger **Aaron Judge** hit more home runs (20) than Sanchez among Yankees farmhands.

He also threw out 36 percent of basestealers in 82 games behind the plate. Those numbers reaffirmed the Yankees' belief that Sanchez has a chance to catch in the big leagues.

Twelve games into the Arizona Fall League, Sanchez had gone 19-for-52 (.365) with 10 extra-base hits, including six homers.

"I have not heard anything but great things about Gary Sanchez," said a baseball official who talked to scouts watching the AFL. "He is throwing the ball good and hitting it hard. His body is in shape. All the reports are very positive."

Sidelined by a hamstring injury at the end of Scranton's season, Sanchez wasn't among the first wave of September callups.

"Gary bought into the program and his work ethic improved," farm director **Gary Denbo** said. "We are very pleased with his progress catching and hitting."

While the Yankees, who signed Sanchez for \$3 million in 2009 out of the Dominican Republic, are thrilled he has developed into a player other teams asked for at the July 31 trade deadline, where he fits into the club's plans is hazy.

Veteran **Brian McCann** will be in the third season of a five-year, \$85 million deal in 2016. **J.R. Murphy** served as McCann's backup in 2015, and the Yankees are high on the 24-year-old homegrown catcher.

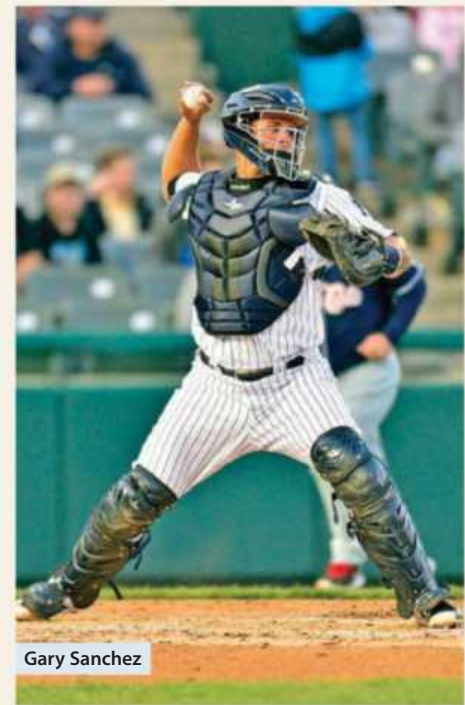
One non-injury avenue for Sanchez to reach New York in 2017 is McCann moving to first base when **Mark Teixeira's** contract expires after the 2016 season.

However, the Yankees liked what **Greg Bird** gave them at first base in 2015 when Teixeira went down with a broken leg.

YANKEE DOODLES

■ Catcher **Luis Torrens**, 19, made it back from right shoulder surgery to participate in the final game of instructional league in October. He missed the entire 2015 season. "He swung the bat well and caught well," Denbo said. "His throwing is not back to 100 percent, but it will be when spring training comes."

■ **Jalal Leach**, a pro scout for the Yankees in 2015, left the organization for a position with the Giants.



Gary Sanchez

DAVID SCHOFIELD

BALTIMORE | Orioles

BY ROCH KUBATKO

Injury Bug Reaches Reyes

BALTIMORE Injuries aren't exclusively the domain of the Orioles' pitching prospects, such as righthanders **Dylan Bundy** and **Hunter Harvey**. One of their top position prospects also had a recent setback.

Righthanded-hitting third baseman **Jomar Reyes** had surgery on Oct. 15 to remove a broken hamate bone from his left hand.

Reyes broke the bone while swinging a bat in instructional league. The schedule was down to its last two games.

"He hit a ball and felt the pain in his wrist," farm director **Brian Graham** told MASNsports.com, "which is very normal with the hamate bone in the hand."

"The pain ends up going to your wrist. He went for a scan and it revealed the hamate fracture.

"He'll be fine in four or five weeks. A lot of good hitters have had that surgery, unfortunately."

Reyes, who will be 19 in 2016, struggled to stay healthy this year at low Class A Delmarva. He missed six weeks over the summer with a sprained right thumb and also missed a few games at the end of the season after suffering a mild concussion.

The Orioles signed Reyes, a native of the Dominican Republic, to a \$350,000 bonus in January 2014.

Reyes jumped on the prospect map in 2014 by hitting .285/.333/.425 with 16 extra-base hits in 53 games in the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League.

Baltimore jumped Reyes to Delmarva in 2015, and he ranked No. 13 on the South Atlantic League prospect list after batting .278/.334/.440 with 36 extra-base hits, including five home runs, in 84 games.

Reyes attracts a lot of attention for his physical 6-foot-3, 220-pound frame.

BIRD SEED

■ Top pitching prospect Bundy reported to the Arizona Fall League after completing a throwing program in Sarasota, Fla. He hasn't pitched since May 21 at Double-A Bowie due to a sore right shoulder. Bundy threw a perfect inning in his first AFL appearance.

■ The Orioles removed righthander **Jon Keller** from the Peoria roster in the AFL because of a sore oblique muscle. Bundy took his spot on the roster. Keller, a 22nd-round pick from Tampa in 2013, went a combined 3-4, 3.77 in 37 relief appearances at high Class A Frederick and Bowie. He struck out 58 batters in 76 innings.

BOSTON | Red Sox

BY ALEX SPEIER

Guerra Showcases Power

BOSTON Shortstop **Javier Guerra's** defensive ability always has turned heads. He commands the attention of evaluators with a well above-average arm and range, along with a feel for the game to make the unexpected and spectacular commonplace.

Guerra complemented that hallmark glove work in 2015 with an eyebrow-raising show of power at low Class A Greenville. He drilled 15 homers, the second-most in the system, while batting .279/.329/.449 in 116 games.

He demonstrated an ability to drive the ball that even he conceded came as something of a surprise given that he had hit just two homers in his first two pro seasons.

"When I signed (out of Panama in 2012), I just wanted to play," said Guerra, 20. "I wasn't thinking about power or that kind of thing. (In 2014), I started realizing I had more power. With more experience, I started realizing I could drive the ball."

That realization at a young age pointed to Guerra's aptitude, along with an ability to amplify strengths while trying to work to correct deficiencies. That commitment will be necessary given that the lefthanded hitter remains at an early stage of his offensive development.

Both his strikeout (23.5 percent) and walk rates (6.3 percent) suggested a hyperaggressive approach that rendered him vulnerable, particularly against southpaws.

Still, given the progress Guerra has shown early in his career, the Red Sox see plenty of reason for optimism about his potential path going forward.

"The development that he's shown offensively is 100 percent aptitude and intelligence," Greenville manager **Darren Fenster** said. "We've seen it on the defensive side. Now that he's able to translate offensively, his development is probably faster than anyone expected."

SOX YARNS

■ Second baseman **Yoan Moncada's** scheduled participation in the Puerto Rican League has been scrapped because of a left hand injury suffered on a hit by pitch in instructional league. The Red Sox expect Moncada to open 2016 at high Class A Salem.

■ Catcher **Christian Vazquez**, who missed all of 2015 after having Tommy John surgery, served as a DH in instructional league and likewise will play in the Puerto Rican League.

TAMPA BAY | Rays

BY MARC TOPKIN

Shaffer Ready For More

ST. PETERSBURG Getting the experience of playing in 31 major league games and making 88 plate appearances was a tremendous experience for third baseman **Richie Shaffer**.

Now the goal is to get better.

Though Shaffer started off with a bang—his first big league hit was a home run off White Sox reliever **Daniel Webb**—he knows his .189/.307/.392 batting line showed the need for improvement.

"Obviously the results aren't fantastic, but it's a growing process. It's a learning experience," said Shaffer, 24. "It's something where I think the more comfortable I get here in the big leagues, the more competitive and productive I'm going to be. And that's just sort of how it is."

One of the biggest challenges for Shaffer, a 2012 first-round pick from Clemson, was getting used to not playing all the time, "especially if you come from the minor leagues where you play consistently every single day," he said.

"You learn your rhythm, you learn your routine. And if you have a bad game or bad at-bat the next day you're right back in there and keep rolling."

"It's been good, though. And I think it's something good to experience this early in my career because if I'm ever called up to do something like this again, I'll have this experience."

Big league manager **Kevin Cash** acknowledged the difficulties for a young player and said the Rays were pleased overall with what they saw from Shaffer, specifically at first base, where he probably will play given **Evan Longoria's** presence at third.

"I know in my mind and in the staff's mind I've done a lot of good, positive things," Shaffer said. "My at-bats haven't been as consistent as they need to be, but that will come with time and comfort . . . In no way, by no means, do I feel like I've been overmatched in any at-bats."

COOL RAYS

■ **Ozzie Timmons**, who appeared in 12 games for the Rays in 2000, will move up from Double-A Montgomery to take over as Triple-A Durham hitting coach.

■ Rays prospects playing in the Australian Baseball League include 2013 first-round catcher **Nick Ciuffo**, second baseman **Riley Unroe**, catcher **Maxx Tissenbaum** and outfielders **Justin Williams** and **Bralin Jackson**.

TORONTO | Blue Jays

BY SHI DAVIDI

Vlad Jr. Moves To Third

TORONTO International scouts projected **Vladimir Guerrero Jr.** as a right fielder, like his father, at the time he signed. The Blue Jays are instead trying him at third base.

The 16-year-old Dominican slugger played the hot corner during instructional league, working regularly on his defense with **Mike Mordecai**, the former infielder who is now the club's coordinator of instruction, and infield coach **Danny Solano**.

"He looks good there," said interim general manager **Tony LaCava**, who oversaw the farm system in 2015. "He's got plus arm strength and moves around well."

The Blue Jays signed Guerrero for \$3.9 million in July, blowing past their allotted international bonus pool of \$2,324,100. A subsequent trade of prospects **Chase DeJong** and **Tim Lincecum** to the Dodgers for three spending slots totaling \$1,071,300 helped ease their overage tax, and reduced the penalty that prevented them from signing players for more than \$300,000 from two international signing periods to one.

Given all the capital spent on landing Guerrero, the Blue Jays have plenty of incentive to maximize his potential impact.

"We want to challenge him," LaCava said. "His bat can play in right field and third base, but if he can pull off third base—and we believe he can—he'll be that much more valuable."

Guerrero spent the summer working out in the Dominican Summer League, and the plan for him is to make the jump to the lower levels of the farm system next spring. But during a visit at Rogers Centre over the summer, Guerrero had a more aggressive time line in mind.

"In my mind, I'll make it in two years," he said when asked how long it would take to reach the big leagues.

JAYS CHATTER

■ Center fielder **Anthony Alford** spent three weeks in instructional league before being told to rest for spring training. Alford had a busy year, starting with a stint in Australia last winter before splitting the season between low Class A Lansing and high Class A Dunedin.

■ First baseman **Rowdy Tellez** is back in action in the Arizona Fall League, where he went 15-for-48 (.313) with three homers and 13 RBIs through 12 games. Surgery on his right hand to repair a broken hamate bone cut short a breakout season that pushed him to Dunedin.

Sims sharpens breaking ball in 2015

ATLANTA | Braves

BY BILL BALLEW



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: baseballamerica.com/t/organization-reports/

ATLANTA The path righthander **Lucas Sims** has followed has not been easy since he signed as the 21st overall pick in the 2012 draft out of high school in Snellville, Ga.

After enduring workload restrictions in 2013 and a rough first half in 2014, Sims suffered a hip contusion that limited him to 20 starts in 2015. The injury resulted from the high Class A Carolina team bus crash in May.

Sims received extra work after the season with Peoria of the Arizona Fall League. The 21-year-old said he appreciates the opportunity to work on a few things.

"I've battled through some adversity over

the past two years, but I think that's been good for my overall development," said Sims, who went 7-6, 4.37 between stops at Carolina and Double-A Mississippi. "I feel like everything is headed in the right direction."

Sims opened the 2014 season as the youngest player in the Carolina League and struggled with his offspeed pitches. He went 8-11, 4.20 in 28 starts, which led to a CL encore in 2015, where he improved his strikeout rate from 6.2 to 8.3 batters per nine innings.

Sims missed nearly two months following the May 12 bus wreck and did not return to the Mudcats' rotation until July 5. Three starts later, the Braves promoted him to Mississippi.

Sims struggled with control in the Southern League, walking 5.5 batters per nine innings, though he issued just five walks in his last three starts.

Sims has improved the command of his 93-94 mph fastball that touches 96. He also has made significant strides with his changeup

over the past two years. His curveball plays as the best breaking ball in the system, though he has been inconsistent with his arm slot, leading to a more slurve offering.

Sims will not turn 22 until May 10 and is on the verge of advancing to Triple-A Gwinnett. The Braves envision him as a future member of the big league rotation.

"Lucas just keeps getting better and better," general manager **John Coppolella** said. "He's continuing to learn and discover what he needs to do to have success. It's going to be fun to see him finish out in Arizona and watch him in spring training."

WIGWAM WISPS

■ Righthander **Andrew Thurman**, another victim of the Carolina bus wreck, headed to the AFL after touching 95 mph during instructional league.

■ The Braves are interested to see how **Connor Lien** fares in the AFL. A stellar defensive center fielder with a cannon arm, he has flashed power but needs to reduce his strikeout rate.



Lucas Sims

CLIFF WELCH

MIAMI | Marlins

BY WALTER VILLA

Closer Inches Closer To Majors

MIAMI Triple-A New Orleans closer **Nick Wittgren** believes he should have made his big league debut in 2015, just like former Purdue batterymate **Kevin Plawecki**, a backup catcher on the Mets' World Series roster.

"I think I could have easily pitched (in the majors) this season," said Wittgren, 24. "I was ready, and I feel even more prepared now."

He may soon get that chance.

If the Marlins don't add Wittgren to the 40-man roster in November, then he will be eligible for selection in the Rule 5 draft, where any team that picks him would have to keep him on their big league roster in 2016 or lose him to his original team.

Wittgren ranked third in the Pacific Coast League with 19 saves in 2015, when he went 1-6, 3.03 in 51 appearances, with 9.2 strikeouts and 1.2 walks per nine innings.

A native of Torrance, Calif., Wittgren's family moved to West Lafayette, Ind., when he was 12. After a year at Parkland (Ill.) JC, he transferred to his local school, Purdue, where he became a reliever for the first time.

"Coming out of junior college, I had elbow surgery," Wittgren said. "That set me back."

Not wanting to pile a high volume of innings on a pitcher recovering from surgery, Purdue's coaches asked Wittgren if he wanted to be their closer. He said yes, and has filled that role ever since.

Wittgren, a ninth-round pick in 2012, has recorded 79 saves in four pro seasons, while brandishing a strong strikeout-to-walk ratio of 6.3.

He throws mostly just a fastball and curveball, mixing in a rare changeup. Wittgren's fastball sits in the 90-93 mph range but topped out at 95 toward the end of 2015. He attributes that to better mechanics.

Wittgren has been healthy since his surgery, and now all he has to do is wait to see if the Marlins protect him.

"It's exciting," he said, "but also nerve-racking."

FISH BITES

■ New Orleans outfielder/first baseman **Brady Shoemaker** hit .284/.359/.417 in 94 games. The Marlins acquired him in the minor league phase of the Rule 5 draft, just as they did **Alejandro De Aza** and **Justin Bour**.

■ Big league utility infielder **Donovan Solano** elected free agency after being outrighted off the 40-man roster in October. He signed as a minor league free agent for 2012.

NEW YORK | Mets

BY ADAM RUBIN

Rare Opportunity For Reynolds

NEW YORK Athletics shortstop **Mark Kiger** in 2006 became the only player in modern baseball history to make his major league debut in the postseason.

The Mets gave shortstop **Matt Reynolds** the opportunity to become the second when he replaced the injured **Ruben Tejada** on the National League Division and Championship Series rosters. **Juan Uribe** replaced Reynolds for the World Series before the rookie could appear in a game.

Tejada suffered a fractured right fibula on a late slide by **Chase Utley** in Game Two of the NLDS.

"It's kind of not how I wanted it, because of how Ruben got hurt," said Reynolds, 24, "but that's what this business is."

Reynolds hit .267/.319/.402 in 115 games at Triple-A Las Vegas in 2015, when he missed most of July with an elbow strain. He hit .333 in 68 games in the Pacific Coast League in 2014, but vice president of scouting and player development **Paul DePodesta** indicated the organization was satisfied.

"He played really, really well at the beginning of the year," DePodesta said. "I think it may have gotten a little stale for him once he didn't get called up right away—when I think he was sort of primed and potentially ready. We just didn't have an opportunity for him, and then he ended up getting hurt."

Reynolds played third base at Arkansas before the Mets selected him in the second round in 2012. He has spent most of his pro career at shortstop, however, with limited exposure at second base. Questions about whether he had the range to remain at shortstop appear to have diminished.

"We drafted him as a shortstop and put him at shortstop right away at (low Class A) Savannah," DePodesta said. "So I don't think there was any real doubt in our minds, but he's continued to get better every year."

"He's one of those guys who just makes very few mistakes."

METAMORPHOSES

■ Four Mets farmhands will represent the organization with Team USA at the international Premier 12 Tournament: shortstop **Gavin Cecchini**, righthanders **John Church** and **Cody Satterwhite** and catcher **Dan Rohlfing**.

■ First baseman **Dominic Smith** rushed to a fast start in the Arizona Fall League, going 14-for-31 (.452) with four extra-base hits and nine walks through nine games.

PHILADELPHIA | Phillies

BY JIM SALISBURY

New Rotation Takes Shape

PHILADELPHIA Five starting pitchers made their big league debut for the rebuilding Phillies in 2015. Could righthander **Jake Thompson**, an in-season trade pickup, be next?

"I think there's a chance," Double-A Reading manager **Dusty Wathan** said. "With the situation we're in right now, his talent level and where he's been the last two years, I don't think it's out of the realm of possibility to see him pitch in Philadelphia next year."

Thompson, who turns 22 in January, was one of five prospects acquired from the Rangers for **Cole Hamels** in July. After the trade, he went 5-1, 1.80 with a 1.00 WHIP in seven starts at Reading. He added 16 innings of one-run ball in the Eastern League playoffs.

Thompson's numbers weren't nearly as good at Double-A Frisco in the Texas system. There, he went 6-6, 4.72 with a 1.41 WHIP in 17 starts.

"He stepped in and became our ace from day one," Wathan said.

Thompson has been part of two big trades in his young career. The Tigers selected him in the second round of the 2012 draft out of high school in Heath, Texas, then traded him to the Rangers for **Joakim Soria**.

"Jake said he tried to do too much the first time he got traded," Wathan said. "This time he just tried to be himself and see what happens. For six weeks, he was pretty darn good."

The 6-foot-4, 235-pound Thompson has a strong four-pitch mix.

"The changeup ended up being a dominant pitch for him," Wathan said. "I think we forced him to throw a few more and it ended up being a very effective weapon."

"He's got all the talent in the world, and you have to like his mentality. He goes right after people, he's very aggressive in the strike zone and he's all business on the mound. He also holds runners well. He's pretty much the total package."

If he continues to make progress, Thompson could join 2015 debuts **Jerad Eickhoff** and **Aaron Nola** in the 2016 rotation.

PHIL-UPS

■ Center fielder **Roman Quinn** will play for Licey in the Dominican League this winter. He tore a hip flexor at Reading and did not play after June 12.

■ Catcher **Jorge Alfaro** suffered a mild hamstring injury during instructional league. He will play in the Venezuelan League when healed.

WASHINGTON | Nationals

BY LACY LUSK

Sneak Peek At Severino

WASHINGTON **Pedro Severino**, a 22-year-old catcher called up in September, waited 19 more days to make his big league debut. Then he promptly banged out his first hit, a pinch-hit double to left field off the Marlins' **Jose Urena** in a 13-3 Nationals victory.

"My first at-bat, I was just really excited," Severino said. "I knew my mom and the rest of my family were out there watching, so I tried to do everything I could. That's a good feeling that I see my work paying off."

The righthanded hitter from the Dominican Republic finished the game behind the plate and later made one start, going hitless in three at-bats to finish at .250 in his first taste of the big leagues. He continued to play this winter in the Dominican League.

For the 6-foot-2, 200-pound Severino, defense has long been a strength. His hitting has not, for he owns a career .236 average in five minor league seasons.

At Double-A Harrisburg in 2015 he hit .246/.288/.331 with five home runs in 91 games. He drew 19 walks and struck out 51 times.

"I want to be better every single day," Severino said. "What's more important right now is my offense. My defense right now is good, but I have to still work on my offense."

Severino said he has a penchant for being overly aggressive, but advice from minor league hitting coordinator **Troy Ginchich** stuck with him all year.

"He told me a little point, and I practiced every single day," Severino said. "That's what I'm doing—trying to hit (the ball) up the middle or to the opposite field more."

Severino, who threw out 38 percent of basestealers, made the Eastern League postseason all-star team. In the final weekend, he learned he was going to Washington.

"That really was a great moment because all players work for that," Severino said. "That's a great feeling when they tell you you're going up because you're working hard every day."

CAPITAL GAINS

■ **Randy Knorr**, who had been the bench coach for ousted big league manager **Matt Williams**, remained in the organization as a senior assistant to the general manager with a focus on player development.

■ **Bobby Henley** and **Matthew LeCroy** also remained in the organization. Henley will become the senior adviser for player development. LeCroy will return to manage Harrisburg.

Jimenez commands premium stuff

DETROIT | Tigers

BY CHRIS IOTT



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: baseballamerica.com/t/organization-reports/

DETROIT Righthander **Joe Jimenez** signed with the Tigers in 2013 as a nondrafted free agent out of the Puerto Rico Baseball Academy. In 2015, he earned the system's minor league player of the year award.

The hard-throwing Jimenez has made great strides and posted excellent numbers in three pro seasons. He has certainly opened eyes among Tigers personnel, including assistant general manager **David Chadd**.

"What Joe has done early in his minor league career has been truly impressive," Chadd said.

The 20-year-old Jimenez went 5-1, 1.47

with an impressive 0.79 WHIP in 2015 in 40 games at low Class A West Michigan. He struck out 61 in 43 innings.

Those 2015 numbers look a lot like the ones the reliever has produced in three seasons since turning pro. Jimenez has gone 11-3, 1.64 with 12.9 strikeouts per nine innings in 71 appearances while pitching at three different levels.

He has issued just 2.4 walks per nine in that time.

"What's impressed me the most with Joe has been his fastball control and his low walk numbers," Chadd said, "as well as the development of his secondary pitches. What makes his fastball so effective is his late life and movement and the deception in his delivery."

Jimenez also continues to develop a slider and a changeup to go with his highly-touted fastball.

Jimenez was the lone representative for the Tigers in the 2015 Futures Game in

Cincinnati. Jimenez threw six pitches, all fastballs, while retiring both batters he faced in that game.

The Tigers have had bullpen issues for several years, but Jimenez hasn't pitched above the Midwest League, so he still has several steps to take.

"How quickly Joe moves through the system depends on Joe and his ability to control and command his pitches," Chadd said. "His performance at the level he is at will dictate that. It's always a fine line between moving too quickly or too slowly."

TIGER TALES

■ Lefthander **Daniel Norris** announced in October that he learned early in the 2015 season that he had thyroid cancer. He is expected to be ready to go for spring training after having offseason surgery.

■ Outfielder **Michael Gerber** got off to a hot start in the Arizona Fall League by going 8-for-19 (.421) with three doubles, a triple and a home run in his first five games.



Joe Jimenez

PAUL GIERHART

CHICAGO | White Sox

BY SCOT GREGOR

Backup Gig For Brantly?

CHICAGO The White Sox reported to spring training in 2015 with plenty of questions at catcher.

They brought in numerous candidates to help provide answers.

Given his experience working with the pitching staff and solid defensive skills, **Tyler Flowers** emerged as Chicago's No. 1 catcher, and **Geovany Soto** broke camp as the backup.

After being claimed on waivers from the Marlins in December, **Rob Brantly** reported to spring training with a legitimate shot to win a job.

Miami's Opening Day catcher in 2013, Brantly had the lefthanded bat the White Sox sought, and they also liked his throwing arm.

But Brantly, the Tigers' third-round pick from UC Riverside in 2010, fractured his left thumb in March and missed the first two months.

It was a fluke injury. Brantly was catching a bullpen session and got crossed up on a pitch.

"It was a tough situation because I was with a new organization, and you have to go out and play and show them what you can do," Brantly said. "I got hurt out of spring, but it gave me a chance to settle down, figure some things out. I've kind of been rolling with it ever since."

Brantly did not have surgery on the thumb, but he missed the first two months of the season before reporting to Double-A Birmingham. In 30 games with the Barons, the 26-year-old catcher hit .325/.347/.496 with four home runs and 22 RBIs.

Bumped up to Triple-A Charlotte, Brantly hit .291/.319/.465 with four homers and 16 RBI in 23 games.

The White Sox called up Brantly in September and he hit .121 (4-for-33) in limited play.

"We like him," big league manager **Robin Ventura** said. "He's got some power, good energy and he brings a lot of other things to the table."

CHI-LITES

■ Second baseman **Micah Johnson**, who opened the season as Chicago's starting second baseman before being demoted to Triple-A Charlotte, is on the mend after having arthroscopic surgery on his left knee on Oct. 1.

■ According to mlbfarm.com, the club's 2015 draft class batted .287, which tied for the second highest combined average with the Rockies. The Dodgers were first at .291.

CLEVELAND | Indians

BY JIM INGRAHAM

Something 'Bruin' For Tribe

CLEVELAND The Indians already have one pitcher from UCLA in their rotation. It may not be long before they have another.

Righthander **Adam Plutko** had a breakout season in 2015, when he went 13-7, 2.39 with a 0.93 WHIP in 27 starts at high Class A Lynchburg and Double-A Akron. Like current Indians starter **Trevor Bauer**, Plutko is a former Bruin.

"Adam combined his solid four-pitch mix with impressive command and pitchability," director of player development **Carter Hawkins** said. "He doesn't back down from challenges, and when you combine all those things it typically leads to success."

The 24-year-old Plutko went 29-10 in his three years at UCLA, and he earned Most Outstanding Player honors at the 2013 College World Series. The Indians selected him in the 11th round of the 2013 draft.

He began the 2015 season at Lynchburg and in eight starts he dominated Carolina League hitters, posting a 1.27 ERA. In 49 innings he struck out 47, walked four and held opponents to a .173 average.

Those numbers earned Plutko a promotion to Akron, where he didn't miss a beat. He started 19 games and went 9-5, 2.86. In 116 innings he gave up 96 hits, with 90 strikeouts and 23 walks. He held opponents to a .222 average.

At 6-foot-3, 195 pounds, Plutko has a prototype pitcher's build, and his impressive 2015 at two different levels could position him as a pitcher to keep an eye on.

Plutko could begin 2016 at Akron, but Indians officials have shown they aren't hesitant to move a pitcher through the upper levels quickly, when merited.

An example of that is righthander **Cody Anderson**, who started the 2015 season by going 3-2, 1.74 in 10 starts at Akron. He finished the year in the big league rotation, going 7-3, 3.05 in 15 starts.

SMOKE SIGNALS

■ Outfielder **Clint Frazier**, who hit .325 in the second half at Lynchburg, has carried that success over to the Arizona Fall League, where in his first nine games he went 14-for-38 (.368) with three extra-base hits.

■ Center fielder **Abraham Almonte**, acquired in a midseason trade that sent **Marc Rzepczynski** to the Padres, finished second on the Indians with five triples, despite playing just 51 games.

KANSAS CITY | Royals

BY ALAN ESKEW

Family Familiarity

KANSAS CITY **Luke Farrell** could certainly empathize with his father **John**, the Red Sox manager who was diagnosed with Stage 1 lymphoma this summer that is currently in remission.

Luke, a 24-year-old righthander, had three surgeries for a golf-ball sized tumor in his neck. The tumor turned out to be benign after a biopsy.

Farrell went 8-2 with 60 strikeouts in 55 innings as a Cleveland high school senior and signed with Northwestern. Before enrolling in 2009, Farrell had a dental appointment when the tumor was found.

It took not one, but two, surgeries in six days to completely remove the tumor. Farrell, who is listed at 6-foot-6, saw his weight drop from 200 to 175 pounds.

The doctors told Farrell that "not in 100 years" would the tumor grow back. But it did in 2011 when he was pitching in the Cape Cod League, which led to another lengthy surgery. Again, the tumor was non-cancerous, and the Royals made him a sixth-round pick in 2013.

"He's probably five years removed from it now," assistant general manager **J.J. Picollo** said. "Obviously, he recovered from it. He has no effects from it. He bounced back, pitched well, finished up his college career well and he's pitched without a problem since."

Farrell went 4-0, 2.34 in his final seven starts at Double-A Northwest Arkansas in 2015.

"He's pitched very well," Picollo said. "He's gotten to Double-A pretty quickly. He's got a lot of mound savvy, a lot of mound presence. He's one of those guys who you can't overlook because he's going to surprise you, because he's going to keep putting up numbers."

Farrell will probably open 2016 back in the Texas League, but he could move quickly to Triple-A Omaha if he starts next season like he finished last season.

ROYALTIES

■ The Royals sent outfielder **Logan Moon**, who hit .340 to win the Rookie-level Appalachian League batting title in 2014, to play for Melbourne in the Australian Baseball League. Teammates include **Ryan Dale** and **Mike Hill**, both Royals infield prospects.

■ **Bubba Starling** got off to a good start in the Arizona Fall League, hitting .333 (12-for-36) in his first nine games, including a two-homer game.

MINNESOTA | Twins

BY PHIL MILLER

Time For New Challenge

MINNEAPOLIS A lot has changed since righthander **Kuo Hua Lo** first arrived in Elizabethton, Tenn., deep in the Appalachian Mountains, to pitch for the Rookie-level Twins.

"Yeah, they have an Applebee's now," vice president for player personnel **Mike Radcliff**, said. "That was a big deal."

By now, so is Lo, who has spent so much time in eastern Tennessee, he reportedly does a credible Southern accent—when not speaking his native Mandarin.

The 23-year-old Taiwan native, who signed for \$125,000 in 2011, made his U.S. debut in the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League in 2012. He then spent three summers in the Appy League, where in 2015 he held batters to a .146 average in 31 innings and racked up seven saves in seven opportunities.

It's rare for a player to remain on a Rookie team for three years, but Lo wasn't exactly stuck at Elizabethton, Radcliff said. The Twins just felt he was better off making the adjustment to a new country, a new language and a new profession before moving up the ladder. He's now a baseball veteran who speaks relatively fluent English.

"He used to be mostly a low-90s fastball guy, but he's got three pitches now, and he's begun using his changeup as an out pitch," Radcliff said. "He's always been able to throw his fastball for strikes naturally, but his command of all three is impressive now."

No kidding. Lo walked just eight batters, none of whom scored, while striking out 43, which was more than one-third of the hitters he faced. He allowed just five runs and 15 hits, posting a 1.44 ERA that made it clear he's ready for more.

"It's time to challenge him, no doubt. He's got the stuff to move up pretty quickly," Radcliff said. "We took it slow with him, but he looks ready for a lot more."

TWIN KILLINGS

■ The Twins outrighted catcher **Eric Fryer** and lefthander **Aaron Thompson**, both of whom spent most of the season at Triple-A Rochester, off the 40-man roster. Both cleared waivers and elected free agency as previously outrighted players.

■ Lefthander **Mat Batts**, who went 15-7, 2.36 after being drafted in the 17th round in 2014, announced his retirement in a column in the Lexington (N.C.) Dispatch—the newspaper that also hired him as a reporter. Batts worked as an intern for Baseball America in 2013.

Gridiron training keeps Reed healthy

MILWAUKEE | Brewers

BY TOM HAUDRICOURT



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: baseballamerica.com/t/organization-reports/

MILWAUKEE After suffering frustrating injuries in previous seasons, **Michael Reed** was determined to do something about it in 2015.

"I wanted to get bigger and stronger," the outfielder said.

With that in mind, the 6-foot, 210-pound Reed immersed himself in football-style workouts after the 2014 season, which in a way came naturally. He played football at Leander (Texas) High before giving it up to concentrate on baseball, and his father **Benton** was a defensive end who made it to the NFL.

Sure enough, Reed made it through the season without being sidelined by injury. Staying

on the field turned out to be a good thing because he experienced a breakthrough season in which he saw action at Double-A Biloxi and Triple-A Colorado Springs as well as the Brewers as a September callup.

Striking while the iron was hot, the Brewers assigned the 23-year-old Reed to the Arizona Fall League.

"Michael has made steady progress in the minor leagues," big league manager **Craig Counsell** said. "We don't know what he's going to become, necessarily, but I think he's on the right path."

A fifth-round pick in 2011 who signed for \$500,000 rather than attend Mississippi, where his father starred in football, Reed is a versatile, righthanded-hitting outfielder with above-average speed and arm strength.

He hit .278/.379/.422 with 30 extra-base hits and 53 walks in 93 games at Biloxi before a promotion to Colorado Springs, where he hit .246 with 13 doubles in 38 games.

The Brewers sent Reed back to Biloxi to aid the Shuckers' playoff run, then summoned him to Milwaukee when injuries thinned the outfield. With a good eye at the plate and the discipline to lay off bad pitches, Reed owns a career .375 on-base percentage—though he hit just five home runs in 2015.

"(On-base percentage) is something I've focused on during my pro career," Reed said. "I think it comes with experience. In high school, I used to chase a lot of bad pitches and could still hit them. It's a lot different in pro ball. You have to get your pitch."

MICROBREWS

■ The Brewers hired Rays director of player personnel **Matt Arnold**, who has a strong background in pro scouting, to serve as assistant to general manager **David Stearns**.

■ Milwaukee hired Cubs minor league pitching coordinator **Derek Johnson** to serve as big league pitching coach. Prior to being hired by the Cubs, he was an acclaimed pitching coach at Vanderbilt.



Michael Reed

JOHN WILLIAMSON

CHICAGO | Cubs

BY GORDON WITTENMYER

Ready To Make Their Pitch

CHICAGO The Cubs haven't produced a major league pitcher from four drafts and four international signing periods under president of baseball operations **Theo Epstein**.

But Epstein expects that to start changing in 2016, even if the hitters in the system continue to outnumber the slow-building group of pitching prospects.

"I do think it's a year that the pitching is going to burst on the scene a little bit," Epstein said. "We have six 20-year-olds that we're really excited about and that have a chance to be impact pitchers as they move through the system."

Righthander **Dylan Cease**, who approached 100 mph in his abbreviated comeback season from Tommy John surgery this year, could be the most intriguing. He fell to the sixth round of the 2014 draft—where he signed for \$1.5 million—because of injury and signability issues. He ranked as the No. 2 prospect in the Rookie-level Arizona League this year.

The short-season Eugene club boasted several talented arms, including righthanders **Oscar de la Cruz** and **Adbert Alzolay**, who both signed as international free agents after the 2012 season. Epstein also mentioned a pair of 2014 draftees: lefthanders **Carson Sands** (fourth round) and **Justin Steele** (fifth), along with 2015 third-rounder **Bryan Hudson**.

Most could spend all or part of next season at low Class A South Bend.

"We have another wave in the upper minors led by (**Duane**) **Underwood** and **Pierce Johnson** who are getting close to being on the big league radar," Epstein said.

Underwood has made the steadiest progress, despite a midseason arm injury. He returned and finished strong, and should open at Double-A Tennessee in 2016.

"Some good things are happening with the pitching," Epstein said, "but we have to continue to be aggressive and add (at the big league level) as we did last winter."

CUBBYHOLES

■ Righthander **Carl Edwards** traveled with the big league team throughout the postseason but was not added to the roster. The Cubs expect him to compete for a bullpen role on next year's Opening Day roster.

■ The Cubs say they still consider rookie **Kyle Schwarber** a potential catcher, even though he played left field exclusively through the playoffs. Unlike last offseason, Schwarber expects to take much of the fall and winter off.

CINCINNATI | Reds

BY C. TRENT ROSECRANS

Reds Eye Weiss For Bullpen

CINCINNATI In recent years, the Reds have tried pitchers—even college closers like **Michael Lorenzen** and **Nick Howard**—as starters and use relief as a fall-back option.

While Lorenzen has reached the big leagues as a starter and Howard produced poor results in 2015, that decision seemed to come earlier for righthander **Zack Weiss**, who recorded 30 saves in 32 chances at high Class A Daytona and Double-A Pensacola this season. He also got the ball late in his first Arizona Fall League appearance and nailed down that save.

Weiss started five games at Rookie-level Billings in 2013 after the Reds selected him in the sixth round of that year's draft out of UCLA, but he has worked exclusively as a reliever since then. He recorded three saves at low Class A Dayton in 2014 before ascending to closer at Dayton.

"The early results were really good, so we decided to move him up to Pensacola," general manager **Walt Jocketty** said, "and he struggled a little bit there initially. Then once he got settled in, he really pitched well."

Weiss allowed seven runs in his first seven appearances at Pensacola, but then allowed just nine more runs in his final 38 appearances of the season, finishing the year 1-3, 1.98 with 12.7 strikeouts per nine innings.

"He has the stuff to be a starter," Jocketty said, "but he's so effective as a closer and a back-end guy, that it's how we're targeting him now in the short term."

Jocketty has said rebuilding the big league bullpen is a priority for the offseason, and Weiss' performance in 2015 will likely earn him an opportunity in spring.

Jocketty noted Weiss' four pitches give him a chance to go back to the rotation, but his success—and the Reds' team needs—line up to keep him in the bullpen.

"We think that's where he's best suited," Jocketty said. "We have a lot of potential starters, and this guy looks like he has the stuff."

"He probably won't use all four pitches (in the bullpen), but the beauty of it is, he has the repertoire to throw pitches when he needed to."

RED HOTS

■ Outfielder **Phillip Ervin** stole seven bases in eight tries through his first 10 games in the Arizona Fall League.

■ Righthander **Nick Travieso** struck out 13 and walked only one batter in three AFL starts totaling 12 innings.

PITTSBURGH | Pirates

BY JOHN PERROTTI

Pirates Get Plucked

PITTSBURGH In baseball, as in most businesses, imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery.

The Pirates have had plenty of success in recent years, making three straight postseason appearances following a string of 20 consecutive losing seasons. Not surprisingly, other teams are noticing—and hiring people away from the organization.

Special assistant to the general manager **Jim Benedict**, credited with working in lockstep with big league pitching coach **Ray Searage** in salvaging the careers of a number of pitchers, was hired by Marlins to be their vice president of pitcher development.

Benedict has a background as both a pitching coach and scout, and the Pirates utilized him in both areas. He identified a number of pitchers acquired by the Pirates in recent years, and he also worked with them both from mechanical and mental standpoints.

The loss of Benedict came after the Marlins had also hired **Marc DelPiano**, also a special assistant to GM **Neal Huntington**, to be their director of player development.

Last winter, the Rangers hired bench coach **Jeff Banister** as manager, and he guided them to the American League West title this year.

Additionally, director of player personnel **Tryone Brooks** interviewed for the Brewers' GM job, and third base coach **Rick Sofield** interviewed for the Padres' managerial vacancy.

"We want good people to get good opportunities elsewhere," Huntington said. "Our challenge is how to replace them, and again that's where we're never stopping in our quest to have more quality people added to the organization. It is an honor, and it's a sign that we're doing some good things."

"We've had three years of 'success', whatever level that is, and some people are trying to come learn from us, and it's an opportunity to continue to get that much better."

PITTBURGERS

■ The Pirates and Marlins swapped minor league righthanders the day after Benedict was hired, with Pittsburgh adding **Trevor Williams** in exchange for **Richard Mitchell**. A Marlins second-round pick from Arizona State in 2013, Williams went a combined 7-10, 3.85 at Double-A Jacksonville and Triple-A New Orleans in 2015.

■ The Pirates pursued former Red Sox GM **Ben Cherington** before he took a teaching position at Columbia.

ST. LOUIS | Cardinals

BY DERRICK GOOLD

Lessons Out West For Weaver

ST. LOUIS After arriving in the Arizona Fall League, righthander **Luke Weaver** quickly realized that wild, wild things could happen when pitching further west than he's ever been in his life.

"The ball will go a long way if you don't put it where it needs to be," the 22-year-old said.

Weaver has made the most of the additional innings he sought in the AFL, recording a 2.61 ERA in 10 innings spread over four relief appearances. The righthander had struck out 12 and walked just three. The reaffirming production comes at the end of a year that started with rotator-cuff soreness.

The 2014 first-round pick from Florida State arrived for the team's early spring training program and with one throw off the mound felt some discomfort that didn't abate. Inflammation had intruded on his rotator cuff, and he instantly slipped into a slower, more conservative throwing program.

"One overthrow, or maybe I didn't land the right way," Weaver said. "But what it really helped me do was understand the importance of routine. There are three to five exercises that I need to do every day, that I need to do to keep strong, and that I had to pay attention to until they were just second nature."

"Now there are benefits. My velocity is up. I'm getting more bite on offspeed pitches."

Weaver returned to the high Class A Palm Beach rotation after a spin through extended spring, and he showed durability and consistency by going 8-5, 1.62 with 88 strikeouts in 105 innings.

Weaver has built his game around his fastball and changeup, and to that tandem he has mixed in a curveball and a slider. His curveball he called a "show" pitch at this point—something to flip in just to keep the hitter honest.

His slider has become more effective for him, especially as he found a grip and speed that makes it act like a "hybrid that's not quite a cutter."

REDBIRD CHIRPS

■ The Cardinals cleared the way for **Pete Kozma's** departure from the organization by removing him from the 40-man roster. The 2007 first-rounder served as starting shortstop for the 2013 team that advanced to the World Series.

■ Though the Cardinals have been lauded for their player development, the move with Kozma means there is not a first-round pick in the organization from before 2011, when St. Louis drafted **Kolten Wong**.

Health, new home boost Manaea

OAKLAND | Athletics

BY CASEY TEFERTILLER



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: baseballamerica.com/t/organization-reports/

OAKLAND The last thing **Sean Manaea** wanted was another injury, but that's exactly what he got in spring training this year.

Back in 2013, the Indiana State lefthander had been considered a potential No. 1 overall draft talent before a hip injury and its aftereffects left scouts wondering about his health. He dropped to the Royals at No. 34 overall.

Manaea got hurt again in 2015, this time with an abdominal strain, just as he was ready to show Kansas City what he could do. Could things get any worse?

"It was a blessing in disguise," Manaea said.

While he recovered, the 23-year-old worked

diligently on developing his changeup, a pitch that had eluded him.

"I was able to work on it every single day, and eventually it came," Manaea said. "That's something I was proud of this year, developing the change. I know it will help me in the years to come."

He made just seven starts at three levels before the Royals packaged him in a deadline deal to the Athletics for **Ben Zobrist**. Manaea quickly made an impression.

When the 6-foot-5, 245-pound southpaw arrived at Double-A Midland, he hooked up with pitching coach **John Wasdin**. Wasdin helped him find a new grip on his slider, and the pitch suddenly became significantly more effective. He throws his slurvy slider at two speeds: one hard to the back foot of righty hitters and the other slower to the strike zone.

The previous rap on Manaea had been that he had an excellent fastball, but his secondary pitches lagged behind. Now he had an effec-

tive slider and change to add to his 93-96 mph four-seamer, and the effect was devastating.

In seven starts at Midland, Manaea went 6-0, 1.90 and struck out 51 in 43 innings. He followed that with a dominant performance in the opener of the Texas League finals, where he hurled eight innings in a 5-2 win against Northwest Arkansas.

"It was really exciting," Manaea said. "It was a lot of fun through the whole playoffs. I haven't been on a championship team since high school."

A'S ACORNS

■ The A's named outfielder **Seth Brown**, a 19th-rounder this year from Lewis Clark State (Idaho), the organization's "baserunning king" during instructional league.

■ The A's did not present a most improved player award this year, but, if they had, farm director **Keith Lieppman** said the honor would have gone to **Jesus Lopez**. The 19-year-old Nicaraguan middle infielder showed high energy during his weeks in Arizona.



Sean Manaea

BILL MITCHELL

HOUSTON | Astros

BY JOSE DE JESUS ORTIZ

Rowin Climbs Astros' Ladder

HOUSTON New farm director **Allen Rowin** is the ultimate survivor in an Astros organization that has had plenty of turnover since **Jim Crane** bought the club and ultimately hired **Jeff Luhnow** as general manager in December 2011.

Since joining the organization as an intern in February 2007, Rowin has earned the trust and respect of three different GMs—**Tim Purpura**, **Ed Wade** and ultimately Luhnow. In that span, he was a crucial assistant to three different farm directors, beginning with **Ricky Bennett** and then **Fred Nelson** and **Quinton McCracken**.

The 36-year-old Rowin now gets his chance to run the farm system. Luhnow promoted McCracken to director of player development and Rowin to director of minor league operations. Rowin served as McCracken's assistant the last three years.

Rowin chuckles when asked how he has survived.

"It's probably my ability to communicate at all levels—players, staff, executives," he said. "I have a good way of relating with people. I try to incorporate everybody's views and make a decision without ostracizing anybody."

The Astros' international coordinator who was in charge of the franchise's baseball academies in Venezuela and the Dominican Republic resigned soon after Rowin joined the club as an intern in February 2007.

Rowin handled that role as intern and eventually was hired full time in October 2007. Each subsequent Astros GM and farm director has added to Rowin's responsibilities. Now he'll handle minor league contracts and oversee the rosters for the organization's nine affiliates.

"I've had some great leaders to work underneath," he said. "The biggest thing I learned from Q the last few years is understanding the players' perspective, and how we can match the goals of the organization with the goals of the players."

SPACE SHOTS

■ The Astros hired former all-star third baseman **Morgan Ensberg** as the system's first "mindset" coach. The team described his job as being to develop players' mental skills "while implementing organizational initiatives."

■ **Lamar Rogers**, who guided Rookie-level Greenville in 2015, will move up to manage short-season Tri-City of the New York-Penn League in 2016.

LOS ANGELES | Angels

BY MIKE DIGIOVANNA

More Than Meets The Eye

ANAHEIM Many eyebrows were raised when the Angels used the 26th pick in the 2015 draft to select **Taylor Ward**, a Fresno State catcher who was ranked No. 70 on the Baseball America pre-draft ranking.

The selection also elicited a collective groan from Angels fans, who looked at Ward's less-than-stellar offensive résumé, his reputation as a strong defensive catcher and concluded he was the next **Jeff Mathis**.

To the surprise of many—and delight of the Angels—it appears Ward may have a little more upside than Mathis.

Ward, who signed for \$1.67 million, played 32 games at Rookie-level Orem and hit .349/.489/.459 with two homers and 19 RBIs. A jump to low Class A Burlington hardly slowed him.

The 6-foot-1, 180-pound catcher hit .348/.412/.413 with one homer and 12 RBIs in 24 games. Almost as impressive: Ward had more walks (39) than strikeouts (23) in his first pro summer.

"Did he exceed expectations? Probably," farm director **Bobby Scales** said. "We wanted him to come in with a blank slate and see what he could do."

As promising as the 21-year-old Ward looked at the plate, he won't reach the majors until he masters the finer points of catching. His footwork and release need to be cleaned up, and his game-calling and handling of pitchers are in the early stages of development.

"In calling a game, you have to understand what goes into the pitcher-catcher relationship," Scales said. "Yeah, he can hit, but his first obligation is to catch the ball, to keep the pitcher in game. He's hearing the message and working hard."

Ward likely will begin 2016 at Burlington or high Class A Inland Empire, and if he continues to hit and progress defensively, he could advance quickly through a system that is thin in catching and will likely lose big leaguer **Chris Iannetta** to free agency this winter.

ANGEL FOOD

■ First baseman **Eric Aguilera**, who hit .327 with 17 homers for Inland Empire, had a solid start in the Arizona Fall League, going 11-for-39 (.282) with a homer and six RBIs.

■ Cuban shortstop **Roberto Baldoquin**, who hit .235 in an injury-plagued season and committed 12 errors in 77 games at Inland Empire—played second and third base during instructional league.

SEATTLE | Mariners

BY RYAN DIVISH

M's Shuffle Scouting Roles

SEATTLE New general manager **Jerry Dipoto** and the Mariners made some changes to titles and responsibilities to the upper level of the baseball operations staff.

Jeff Kingston will remain in the organization, as expected, after serving as assistant GM to **Jack Zduriencik** and interim GM after Zduriencik was fired. Kingston was the organization's contracts and transactions expert, and he will perform those duties as an assistant to Dipoto. He'll also oversee all player development in the organization.

Andy McKay, the club's new director of player development, will report to him. Kingston has some experience in that role, since he worked as assistant director of player development with the Padres in 2001.

Tom Allison, who served as director of pro scouting for the past three seasons, has been promoted to vice president of player personnel. He'll oversee the Mariners' entire scouting operation—amateur, pro and international.

Directors of those individual scouting branches will report directly to him, including holdovers **Tom McNamara** (amateur) and **Tim Kissner** (international). Allison has an outstanding reputation around baseball and in the scouting community.

To fill Allison's role, the Mariners promoted **Lee MacPhail IV** to director of pro scouting. He has served as a pro scout for the past three seasons. He has worked with six different organizations in various roles since 1995, including director of pro scouting for the Orioles in 2012.

The Mariners also announced the hiring of **Joe Bohringer** as special assistant to Dipoto. Bohringer comes to Seattle from the Cubs, where he worked the past four seasons as their director of pro scouting. His role had been diminished by the Cubs in September when they hired **Jared Porter** away from the Red Sox.

Bohringer previously worked with Dipoto in Arizona, where he was a pro scout for the Diamondbacks.

MARINADE

■ Outfielder **Dario Pizzano** joined the Arizona Fall League as a replacement for **Tyler O'Neill**. He hit .308/.366/.457 at Double-A Jackson in an injury-shortened season.

■ O'Neill left the AFL to play for Canada in the inaugural Premier 12 tournament alongside fellow Mariners prospect **Gareth Morgan**.

TEXAS | Rangers

BY JEFF WILSON

Sadzeck Brings The Heat

ARLINGTON Teams aren't always comfortable inviting players to the scout-heavy Arizona Fall League only a few months before they might be exposed to the Rule 5 draft.

Such players are often stashed away in their offseason homes, where they can't be seen by the other 29 teams. If a team sends one of its Rule 5-eligibles to Arizona, it often intends to add him to the 40-man roster and thus keep him out of the Rule 5 talent pool.

That's what 24-year-old righthander **Connor Sadzeck** is hoping as one of the seven Rangers prospects playing for the Surprise Saguaros. He lit up the radar gun early on in the AFL campaign, with his fastball clocked as fast as 101 mph, as he continued to recover from Tommy John surgery.

"I'm out here getting more work in, and it's a big year for me, too," said Sadzeck, an 11th-round pick from Howard (Texas) JC in 2011. "It's an evaluation period for me. They've touched on it a little bit. The organization does need to make a decision. I think that's part of it as well."

Sadzeck won't work as a starter in the AFL and won't pitch through the end of the season. The Rangers want to build his innings, but they don't want him to exceed 100 total for the season.

Sadzeck survived the perils of pitching at high Class A High Desert, going 2-1, 3.98 in 41 innings, to earn a promotion to Double-A Frisco after the roster shuffles following the trade for **Cole Hamels** that sent three pitching prospects to the Phillies. However, he posted a 9.61 ERA in 20 innings in the Texas League.

"The arm feels great," Sadzeck said. "When I got to Double-A, I kind of put this unnecessary pressure on myself. I think I got in my own head and tried to do more than I was already doing. That was the toughest part about my season."

RANGERS ROUNDUP

■ The latest series of MRI exams showed no issues with the right shoulder of **Jurickson Profar**, who resumed a throwing program but won't play the field in the AFL. He doubled and homered in his AFL debut as the DH.

■ Among the four players the Rangers outrighted to Triple-A Round Rock on Oct. 21, only outfielder **Ryan Strausborger** could not refuse assignment. The 27-year-old rookie batted .200 (9-for-45) in spot duty with the Rangers after hitting .278/.329/.438 in 78 games at Round Rock.

McMahon aims to improve defense

COLORADO | Rockies

BY JACK ETKIN



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: baseballamerica.com/t/organization-reports/

DENVER Concentrated work on defense was the instructional-league priority for high Class A Modesto third baseman **Ryan McMahon**, and the initial results were encouraging.

Director of player development **Zach Wilson** and Modesto development supervisor **Jerry Weinstein** devised a comprehensive plan for McMahon during instructs.

"It wasn't easy," Wilson said. "It was intense. It was every single day. He got after it, and he certainly improved himself with the process."

Weinstein and McMahon called their program "Project .950." The immediate aim is for the 20-year-old to finish with a .950 fielding

average. He's a career .917 fielder after making 39 errors in 2015, when he hit .300/.372/.520 with a California League-leading 43 doubles to go with 18 homers and 75 RBIs.

Another reason for Weinstein to choose .950: He managed third baseman **Nolan Arenado** at Modesto in 2011 and helped transform him into an elite defender. Weinstein said that .950 is a fair compromise between Arenado's fielding average in the minors (.939) and majors (.966).

Over a period of about 75 minutes daily, McMahon, a 2013 second-round pick from high school in Santa Ana, Calif., took 100 groundballs of all types and had to make the play at or above game speed and succeed 95 times. The drills were recorded on video and critiqued at the end of each day.

"He made all the plays this year in Modesto," said Weinstein, who will manage Wareham in the Cape Cod League next summer but hopes to remain involved with the Rockies. "He

made the routine plays, the spectacular plays. But he also screwed them up. There's always a mental component to anything you do in training, and the mental component for Mac was to be there on every pitch.

"He didn't become a better fielder or a better technician because he makes all the plays. What he did become is a better focuser. He became more consistent because he works very well when you have measurable goals and you put pressure on him . . .

"If he continues to grow the way that he has, he's going to be a well above-average major league defender."

ROCKY ROADS

■ Modesto hitting coach **Drew Saylor**, who spent four seasons with the Rockies, will manage the Dodgers' Rookie-level Ogden affiliate in 2016. Peak performance coordinator **Andy McKay** left to become the Mariners' farm director.

■ The Rockies fired Triple-A Albuquerque hitting coach **Dave Hajek** after 12 seasons in the organization.



Ryan McMahon

BILL MITCHELL

ARIZONA | Diamondbacks

BY JACK MAGRUDER

D-Backs Find 'Small Pollock'

PHOENIX Outfielder **Jason Morozowski** made franchise history by hitting for the cycle in the Pioneer League playoffs, punctuating his first pro season at Rookie-level Missoula.

Morozowski completed his cycle with a homer in the Osprey's win-or-go-home second game of the semifinal series against Billings, the start of a remarkable postseason in which he hit .480 (12-for-25) with two homers and seven RBIs in six games.

"He's very clutch. He always seems to be in the middle of things," fielding coordinator **Tony Perezchica** said.

The 21-year-old Morozowski made such an impression in his first season, hitting .292/.369/.479 with 15 doubles, six homers and eight stolen bases in 63 games, that some in the organization see similarities with big league center fielder **A.J. Pollock**.

"We called him a small Pollock," Perezchica said.

That's high praise for Morozowski, a 13th-round pick out of Mount Olive (N.C.) in 2015.

Morozowski, a righthanded hitter, had his big year with a swing that included a high leg kick as part of a timing mechanism. During instructional league, he worked with minor league hitting coordinator **Chris Cron** to cut the swing down.

Morozowski spent the majority of 2015 in right field and has the arm to make that his best spot, Perezchica said, though he can play all three outfield spots. All five of his assists came from right field.

"Defensively he's done a lot of good things," Perezchica said. "He moves well."

Morozowski showed average to above-average speed, and the Diamondbacks saw an ability to find an extra gear on infield hits and balls in the gap.

"(He has) enough speed to make a difference," Perezchica said.

SNAKE BITES

■ Shortstop **Kai Simmons** will miss the start of the 2016 season while serving a 50-game suspension after testing positive for an amphetamine. The 2015 eighth-round pick out of Kennesaw State hit .222/.278/.310 with two homers and 18 RBIs in 50 games at Missoula.

■ Outfielder **Daniel Palka** extended his strong season in the Arizona Fall League, hitting .353 (18-for-51) with two homers and 12 RBIs in his first 13 games. He established career highs in 2015 with 36 doubles and 29 homers at high Class A Visalia.

LOS ANGELES | Dodgers

BY BILL PLUNKETT

No Time Like The Present

LOS ANGELES Righthander **Walker Buehler's** first year as a pro will not involve him throwing a single pitch.

The Dodgers chose the 21-year-old out of Vanderbilt with their top pick in the 2015 draft at No. 24 overall. Within a few weeks, he had Tommy John surgery.

Buehler now faces at least a year—likely more—of rehab before he can step on a mound again.

"The plan is to try and throw next year in (instructional league), which is 13½ months out of surgery, which is a pretty conservative time line from what I've heard about the recovery," Buehler said.

"So I don't think there's a whole lot of pressure. I'm not trying to come back for a full season. Hopefully, that goes well. But if not, I've kind of got this buffer time before the (2017) season."

The prospect could be daunting for any athlete. It entails day after day, month after month of tedious physical therapy and rehab activities with no prospect of actual competition until, possibly, spring of 2017. But Buehler said he has resigned himself to the long process.

"I don't think you have any choice but to be ready for it," he said. "You do the rehab to the best of your abilities and hope it all works out. I'm good with it."

Buehler said he is aware just how common Tommy John has become, but that gives him less comfort than the trust he has in **Dr. Neal ElAttrache**, who performed the surgery. Buehler said the timing of his injury was probably about as favorable as it could get.

"I'd rather have it now than get two years into this thing and have to have it," he said. "I think now is kind of the best time I could have it, to be honest with you."

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL

■ Former big league righthanders **Scott Baker**, **Chin-Hui Tsao** and **Brandon Beachy** each elected free agency after the Dodgers outrighted them off the 40-man roster. Beachy is the most interesting of the three. He made it back from a second Tommy John surgery, but he did not fare well in two July starts for the Dodgers.

■ After nine seasons with the Dodgers, vice president of medical services **Stan Conte** resigned his position. Conte is one of the leading researchers into Tommy John recovery and plans to open a consulting firm to continue that research and to study other baseball injuries.

SAN DIEGO | Padres

BY TOM KRASOVIC

Shortstop Shuffle

SAN DIEGO The Padres are back in the market for a shortstop after receiving poor results in 2015 from veteran utility players **Alex Amarista** and **Clint Barmes** as well as a displaced second baseman (**Jedd Gyorko**) and third baseman (**Will Middlebrooks**).

The farm system, it appears now, will need at least another year to provide a shortstop who is a viable solid starter.

San Diego had a well-regarded shortstop prospect heading into last offseason in **Trea Turner**, a first-round pick in 2014.

But first-year general manager **A.J. Preller** dealt Turner (as a widely-reported player to be named) to the Nationals in a three-team trade last December that brought outfielder **Wil Myers** to the Padres.

Succeeding Turner as the system's top shortstop prospect is **Jose Rondon**, whom San Diego acquired from the Angels in the **Huston Street** trade during the 2014 season.

The 21-year-old began 2015 at high Class A Lake Elsinore, where he hit .300/.360/.414 in 57 games. When Turner officially moved on to the Nationals in June, Rondon replaced him at Double-A San Antonio.

Rondon struggled at the plate in the Texas League, batting .190/.219/.270 in 28 games before he broke his right elbow on July 20 after he dived back into second base as a baserunner. He missed the rest of the season and is expected to begin swinging a bat again in December.

Rondon has good hands defensively but just borderline speed. Though his power ranks as well below-average, the righthanded hitter owns a career .292 average in the minors.

Likely targeted for San Antonio again in 2016, Rondon can position himself for a big league callup by improving his strength, hitting power and overall consistency.

"He has a chance to get there as an everyday player," assistant general manager **Josh Stein** said.

FATHER FIGURES

■ Corner outfielder **Nick Torres**, a 2014 fourth-rounder from Cal Poly, assumed **Travis Jankowski's** spot in the Arizona Fall League and hit .304 (14-for-46) with a home run, two doubles through 11 games.

■ Low Class A Fort Wayne second baseman **Luis Urias** hit .318 (14-for-44) through his first 16 games with Obregon of the Mexican Pacific League. The 18-year-old was one of the youngest starters in the Midwest League in 2015.

SAN FRANCISCO | Giants

BY ANDY BAGGARLY

A Clean Slate For Mejia

SAN FRANCISCO Lefthander **Adalberto Mejia** tried to take a shortcut and learned a hard lesson. Now he's back on a path that should lead him to the big leagues before too long.

The 22-year-old had to wait until June to make his season debut at Double-A Richmond because of a 50-game suspension after testing positive for Silbutramine, a controlled stimulant commonly used as an appetite suppressant.

Conditioning has been an issue at times for the stocky, 6-foot-3 southpaw, whose listed weight of 195 pounds strains credibility.

Mejia went 5-2, 2.45 in 12 games (nine starts), held opponents to a .204 average and posted a 1.09 WHIP in the Eastern League. He bounced back well after dealing with intermittent shoulder soreness in July, and he made up for lost time in the Arizona Fall League.

"He was behind the eight-ball with the suspension and couple minor injuries here and there," farm director **Shane Turner** said, "but when you see him on the mound, he's got 'big leaguer' written all over him."

"His fastball can run up to 95 (mph), and even when it's 88, he can throw it by guys. He has finish on the ball, sink on the ball, and stuff to use around it."

General manager **Bobby Evans** said he looks forward to seeing Mejia in big league camp next spring, and with no suspension hovering over him, there's a chance he might even become a factor on the big league level at some point in 2016.

"He knows how to pitch with his fastball and locate," Evans said. "Those are things he already has. There's a lot to work with there. He brings some velo with him. (He's) trying to develop the consistency of command, consistency with breaking stuff, and that's what you expect for a guy who missed a lot of time."

"This spring will be big for him, and the season will be big."

GIANTICS

■ Two of Mejia's AFL teammates got off to roaring starts at Scottsdale. Shortstop **Christian Arroyo** hit .400 (18-for-45) with three homers through 11 games, while outfielder **Mac Williamson** hit .372 (16-for-43) with two homers through 11 games.

■ Righthanded reliever **Ray Black** reportedly hit 102 mph in an AFL game. Among major leaguers, only **Reds** closer **Aroldis Chapman** has thrown a pitch that fast since 2014.

Cuban free agents get extra looks

BY TEDDY CAHILL

DELRAY BEACH, FLA.

After defecting from Cuba earlier this year, free agents righthander Vladimir Gutierrez and outfielder Guillermo Heredia showcased their talents to a bevy of scouts and a small crowd of curious onlookers the morning of Oct. 24 at the Elev8 Baseball Academy.

Heredia, 24, left the island early in the year, while Gutierrez, 20, defected from the Cuban team in February during the Caribbean Series in Puerto Rico. Both have spent the last couple months working out at the Academy, preparing for the opportunity to sign.

"I've worked for this day, I knew what to expect," Gutierrez said through the translation of his agent Brian Mejia. "I wasn't scared at all. The preparation that I've had, I just put it into practice."

Heredia, the No. 11 prospect on the island in August 2014, was Cuba's center fielder during the 2013 World Baseball Classic and showed during the workout many of the same tools that he did during the tournament. A plus runner, he ran the 60-yard dash in 6.5 seconds and turned in a 3.93 home-to-first time during live batting practice. He has a strong defensive reputation, and won two gold gloves in Cuba's Serie Nacional.

During batting practice, Heredia unveiled a wrinkle in his profile. He was a righthanded hitter in Cuba, but Saturday he also took swings lefthanded. He is still polishing his lefthanded swing, but said he believes he can be a switch-hitter going forward.

"I've always liked switch-hitting," Heredia said through Mejia's translation. "I feel like I can do it. I would like to approach it."

Heredia is not subject to the international bonus pools because he played five seasons as a professional in Cuba. He is considered to be close to big league ready.

Gutierrez, however, is subject to the international bonus pools. He ranked one spot behind Heredia in last year's rankings and pitched two seasons in Serie Nacional, winning rookie of the year honors during the 2013-14 campaign.

Gutierrez showed off a full arsenal of pitches. His fastball sat 91-92 mph, while his sharp curveball stood out as his best secondary offering. He also showed a changeup and a slider.

Gutierrez primarily was used as a reliever in Cuba, but profiles as a starter. Listed at 6-foot-3, 183 pounds, he still has some room to fill out, and he said he has been working to build up his strength.

"As pitchers evolve, they've got to get their lower half in shape," Gutierrez said. "Just getting stronger."

With their first workout completed, Gutierrez and Heredia know they have to keep working to continue to improve while they wait for the signing process to play out.

"I feel like it's a marathon," Heredia said. "It's going to be a long process because I have to be ready for any event or any showing. I'm going to continue to work on being ready for when my number is called."

Sierra Appears In Jupiter

Earlier in the week, during an exhibition game at the World Wood Bat Association World Championship, scouts were able to watch another Cuban free agent. Righthander Yaisel Sierra made a start for the Astros Scout

Team against the Homeplate Chilidogs on Oct. 22 at the start of the massive high school tournament in Jupiter, Fla.

Sierra was the No. 13 prospect in Cuba in April and defected this spring after the season ended. His appearance in Jupiter was Sierra's first game action in a couple of months, but he overmatched the Chilidogs. While wearing a Cuban national team jersey, he threw three perfect innings, striking out four batters. His fastball sat in the mid 90s, peaking at 96 mph. He used his slider as his out pitch. All four of his strikeouts came on his slider, and a particularly tough 87 mph slider led to a broken bat groundout to end the second inning. He also showed one changeup.

Sierra said he was particularly pleased with the progress of his secondary pitches over the last few months.

"I worked 24/7 for my slider and changeup," he said through translator and former big leaguer Alex Sanchez. "I was very excited to throw my slider and changeup because they don't throw that kind of pitch in Cuba."

Sierra played in Serie Nacional and threw 5 2/3 scoreless innings against USA Baseball's Collegiate National Team in 2014. Born in 1991, he was much older than the Chilidogs.

Sierra's appearance with the Astros was organized by Charlie Gonzalez, the Houston Astros' senior scouting adviser and the general manager of the scout team.

"He's always brought in a couple guys per year that have been like that, whether it's a high-profile high school guy or a guy that is going to be a good international type guy," coach Jerad Goodwin said. "He sets us up and puts us in good spots—a good platform for



Yaisel Sierra appeared in an exhibition game at the World Wood Bat event in Florida

everyone to show what they have."

The Astros defeated the Chilidogs, 2-0. Bo Bichette (Lakewood High, St. Petersburg, Fla.), the son of former big leaguer Dante Bichette and an Arizona State commit, went 1-for-2 and drove in both runs.

After the game, Sierra took a picture with his teammates-for-the-afternoon. He is waiting for an opportunity to sign a professional contract, but for one afternoon, he shared the field with the Astros Scout Team, and was thankful for the chance to do so.

"I want to say thank you to all the kids who played today," he said. "I've got a big respect for all of them."

Fields delivers after long path to baseball

BY BILL MITCHELL

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ.

Roemon Fields wouldn't be playing center field and batting leadoff for the Salt River Rafter of the Arizona Fall League if not for the support and influence of his grandmother, Rose Pierce, and his brother, Anthony. The 24-year-old Blue Jays farmhand, who reached Triple-A to end his first full season as a pro, would instead be delivering mail in his hometown of Seattle.

Fields' rapid ascent through Toronto's minor league system comes after a past so unbelievable that movie studios would probably reject a proposed script about his baseball career as being too inconceivable. Growing up in Seattle, the athletic Fields barely played baseball during his high school years, instead starring as a point guard on the Rainier Beach High basketball team while also spending his autumn months playing football. It wasn't until after his high school graduation that Fields received a visit from a mystery man asking him if he was interested in playing baseball at nearby Yakima Valley (Wash.) CC.

"A man just knocked on my door—a college dude—and said, 'Do you want to play baseball?'" Fields said. "I said, 'I haven't played baseball in a long time.'"

It was Ken Wilson, who had just been named coach at Yakima Valley. He convinced Fields to play for him. Fields starred there for two years before going on to Bethany College,

an NAIA school in Kansas, largely to continue his education,

Fields excelled on the field at Bethany while also competing as a 60-meter indoor sprinter on the school's track and field team. In his first season in 2012, Fields led the team with a .450/.485/.656 slash line and 31 stolen bases, followed by a senior year in which he batted .348/.419/.511 with 28 stolen bases. He received some interest from the Royals after his junior year, but went undrafted.

Fields was just ready to get on with life and use his education after his time at Bethany, securing a job with the U.S. Postal Service delivering mail in Seattle. He didn't expect to play baseball again until Marcus McKimmy, a former Yakima Valley coach, reconnected with him.

McKimmy was coaching a team that was preparing to play in the World Baseball Challenge, an international tournament in Prince George, British Columbia. He wanted Fields to play center field.

"I told him, 'No, I'm done with baseball,'" Fields said, before his brother convinced him to take McKimmy's offer. Fields hadn't touched a bat since leaving Bethany, and the day before he left for the tournament he was scrambling to find a glove and cleats. In eight games against teams from Canada, Japan, Taiwan and Cuba, Fields batted .379 with three stolen bases. That was enough to draw the interest of Matt Bishoff, a scout from



Roemon Fields worked as a mail carrier until a former coach resuscitated his baseball career

the Blue Jays, who eventually signed him in August 2013.

At 23, Fields began his career in the short-season Northwest League. While batting .269/.338/.350 for Vancouver, Fields led the league with 48 stolen bases, shattering the franchise record.

Fields jumped two levels to high Class A Dunedin of the Florida State League to start his first full professional season, batting .269/.312/.348 in 66 games before being promoted to Double-A New Hampshire where he hit .257/.321/.292 in 49 games. He finished the year with six games with Triple-A Buffalo. Fields wound up with a total of 46 steals in 60 attempts combined.

There's a big difference in the quality of pitching at each of the three levels in which Fields played in 2015, and he had to make adjustments with each promotion.

"High A was more fastballs than Double-A," Fields said. "(In) Triple-A, it's more offspeed. They know how to really work the count and being a better pitcher."

Fields is continuing his crash course in baseball in the Arizona Fall League. He knows that he needs to find ways to get on base more often in order to better utilize his plus-plus speed.

"When I'm on base, I like to steal and that creates havoc," Fields said. "A pitcher might pitch a fastball and give the hitters a better pitch to hit. When I'm on base, it's an advantage to our team."

Scouts covering the AFL see Fields' ceiling as that of a fourth outfielder, remarking that he doesn't get on base enough to be a regular.

That may not be the case, according to Salt River hitting coach John Tamargo, who also coached Fields this summer in Dunedin.

"Right now it's a little early in his career," Tamargo said. "I wouldn't count him out to be an everyday outfielder. He has the tools. He puts the ball in play, he can run, and he plays a really good center field. He has a bright future ahead of him."

Tamargo also likes how Fields' attitude rubs off on everyone around him.

"He's just an excitable kid to be around," Tamargo said. "He's always got a smile on his face. He comes to work every day and he loves playing the game. He plays the game really hard . . . guys in the clubhouse, guys in the dugout, they feed off that stuff, because when your leadoff hitter's out there busting his tail and playing the game the right way, guys feed off of that stuff."

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Thompson takes over as Auburn moves on

BY TEDDY CAHILL

After the surprising move to fire coach Sunny Golloway on Sept. 27—while fall ball was under way—Auburn athletic director Jay Jacobs moved quickly to find a replacement, introducing Butch Thompson as the Tigers' new coach on Oct. 22.

Thompson, 44, was an Auburn assistant coach from 2006-08, and interviewed for the head job two years ago, the last time it was open. Instead, Jacobs picked Golloway and Thompson remained the associate head coach at Mississippi State, where he had been since leaving Auburn.

Jacobs didn't pass on a second opportunity to hire Thompson, the 2014 Baseball America/ABCA Assistant Coach of the Year, and bring him back to the Plains.

"It's great to be back at Auburn," Thompson said at his introductory news conference. "I wanted this job because of Auburn's history, tradition and passion."

Thompson received a five-year contract that will pay \$350,000 annually.

Jacobs said Thompson's extensive experience in the Southeastern Conference, where he has been an assistant coach since 2002, was one of the factors that made him an attractive candidate.

"When you begin to look at what Butch has done from a recruiting standpoint as well as from a player development standpoint, it's very rare that you're able to hire someone that has all of those qualities," Jacobs said. "Butch has those."

Thompson began his coaching career as an assistant at Huntingdon (Ala.) in 1993. He returned to Birmingham Southern, his alma mater, as an assistant, then got his first shot at head coaching in 1997 at Jefferson (Ala.) JC, going 39-21. He spent another four years at Birmingham Southern before taking a job as an assistant under Dave Perno at Georgia, beginning a 14-year run in the SEC.

Once he was in the fold at Auburn, Thompson quickly filled out his staff, hiring Brad Bohannon, the 2015 Assistant Coach of the Year, away from Kentucky, and Doug Sisson, who had been the White Sox's minor league outfield and baserunning coordinator for three years.

Like Thompson, Bohannon has extensive experience coaching in the SEC, having spent the last 12 years at Kentucky. Sisson has spent most of his career in the professional ranks, but was an assistant at Georgia from 2006-07, and at Birmingham Southern from 1988-1991, during Thompson's playing career.

The new coaches' first job will be stabilizing



Auburn hired Butch Thompson, the 2014 Assistant Coach of the Year, as its new coach.

the program following Golloway's dismissal. Auburn said it fired Golloway with cause, though he disputed the allegations during a news conference two weeks after Thompson's hiring. Golloway said he doesn't believe Auburn will be the last place he coaches and is looking forward to the future. His lawyer, John Saxon, has threatened litigation.

The timing of the dismissal made for an abnormal search, as most schools were in the

midst of fall ball. But Jacobs said he was pleasantly surprised with the amount of interest he received despite the timing.

"I was concerned about that," he said. "But it just goes to show that there's a lot that can be done here."

For his part, Thompson said he thought the timing was perfect.

"I think we can take a positive outlook and see at this point in the time of the year of where we're going," he said. "I think we have a good ballclub. I know these players. I've competed against these players. We will not give this season away, next week away, tomorrow away, today away, a pitch away."

The Tigers went 36-29 last season and made their first NCAA tournament appearance in five years. Auburn went 1-2 in the Tallahassee Regional, defeating Mercer, but losing twice to the College of Charleston.

Auburn returns center fielder Anfernee Grier, who hit .323/.391/.445 and scored 41 runs to lead the team last season. Righthander Keegan Thompson, the Tigers' Friday night starter, also returns, but will be sidelined after having Tommy John surgery in June, and could miss the entire season.

Before his introductory news conference, Thompson met with his new team.

"I basically just told them, 'It's OK, it's going to be OK,'" he said. "And you guys, maybe through little blinks of adversity and challenges, you have an opportunity to be a strong team. Just like any ballclub, you go through adversity."

"My plan is to love them up, coach them up and develop them so that they give every ounce of their ability to Auburn University."




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Jupiter gives scouts last look at top hitters

BY HUDSON BELINSKY

JUPITER, FLA.

The World Wood Bat Association World Championship brings together most of the country's top prep prospects, and swarms of scouts and college coaches make the journey to Jupiter to see players using wood bats against quality competition. While the event does attract many pitching prospects, it is in some respects more important for position players because of the opportunity it provides for scouts to evaluate them against quality pitching. In many instances, Jupiter is the last opportunity evaluators have to see prospects in an environment that (at least somewhat) replicates professional baseball.

Catchers

Brandon Martorano (Christian Brothers Academy, Lincroft, N.J.) had an outstanding week at the plate and was named MVP of the tournament. Martorano was a regular on the showcase circuit this summer. Playing for the EvoShield Canes, Martorano's power was on display, as he laced several balls to his pull side. This isn't new power for Martorano—he homered at the East Coast Pro showcase. Martorano is flexible behind the plate and, despite his 6-foot-2 frame, he is able to set a low target for pitchers. Martorano is committed to North Carolina.

Sharing time behind the plate with Martorano, Brad Debo (Orange High, Hillsborough, N.C.) had a solid week. Debo was the MVP of this event back in 2014. After showing a pull-heavy approach earlier in the summer, Debo used the opposite field well.

First Basemen

Alex Kirilloff (Plum Senior High, Pittsburgh) manned first base for the Baseball U Bonsall Bat team for most of the week in Jupiter, though he said that he expects to play center field for his high school team in the spring. Kirilloff's tools indicate that he may end up in the outfield long term. Kirilloff made a name for himself on the showcase circuit this summer, when he showed off exceptional raw power and raw speed.

Kirilloff went 5-for-16 on the week. On



Brandon Martorano helped EvoShield Canes repeat as champions of the Jupiter event

October 24 against FTB Tucci, Kirilloff went after an elevated fastball and drilled it to right center field for a triple. He made it to third base in 11.8 seconds. Kirilloff is committed to play at Liberty.

Suiting up for the Braves Scout Team/Ohio Warhawks, Jaquez Williams (East Coweta High, Sharpsburg, Ga.) took several strong at-bats in Jupiter. He's a lefthanded hitter with a strong, physically mature frame, and he has a knack for producing line drives. Williams is not yet committed to college.

Middle Infielders

Manning shortstop for the Astros Scout Team/FTB Tucci, Delvin Perez (International Baseball Academy, Ceiba, P.R.) has one of the highest ceilings of any player in the 2016 draft class. Perez has an extremely quick first step and some of the best pure arm strength in the class. In Jupiter, Perez had an excellent week defensively, and made one of the best plays that the amateur scouting community has seen this year. With the bases loaded and one out, Perez got a slow roller up the middle. He charged the ball, dove, fielded it, did a somersault, and somehow threw a strike to

home plate for a force out.

Offensively, Perez was fire and ice in Jupiter. At times, he looked overmatched, with an inconsistent swing and poor strike zone awareness. At other times, Perez launched authoritative line drives to his pull side, putting his elite hand speed on display. On the week, he went 5-for-16 with two doubles and five runs scored.

Nicholas Quintana (Arbor View High, Las Vegas) could be the next prospect to come out of Sin City. Quintana made noise with his promising righthanded bat all summer, and he showed excellent power playing for the Canes in Jupiter, hitting one home run and pulling a ball deep but foul in the championship game. Quintana went 9-for-18 on the week. He is committed to Arizona.

Carter Kieboom (Walton High, Marietta, Ga.) has a reputation as one of the better righthanded prep hitters in the class, thanks to his advanced timing and bat speed. With the Braves Scout Team in Jupiter, Kieboom expanded the strike zone at times, but he stuck to the approach that has endeared him to scouts thus far, seeing lots of pitches and battling with two strikes. The Clemson commit ended up going just 2-for-15 at the event, though he saw an average of over four pitches per plate appearance.

Third Base

Playing next to Kieboom for much of the weekend, Josh Lowe (Pope High, Marietta, Ga.) had one of the best performances of any prospect. His plus power played in game action, particularly during a matchup against the Rawlings Prospects. Lowe pulled a home run to the power alley in right center field that traveled an estimated 390 feet, according to TrackMan Live technology. In his next at-bat, Lowe roped a line drive into foul territory with an exit velocity of 104 mph. Lowe showed solid speed, with a home-to-first time of 4.32 seconds on one ground ball.

For the Texas Scout Team Yankees, Ulysses Cantu (Boswell High, Fort Worth, Texas) showed well offensively. Cantu, a Texas Tech commit, has a compact swing but still shows over-the-fence power from the right side. Cantu pulled two home runs in Jupiter as he pieced together an 8-for-15 week.

Lefthanded-hitting Joe Rizzo (Oakton High, Vienna, Va.) looked like more of a singles hitter with the Canes in Jupiter, peppering the opposite field with line drives and bloopers. Rizzo, a South Carolina commit, went 8-for-22, though he did not get the opportunity to face elite velocity, which he has



Alex Kirilloff played first base in Jupiter, but may end up as an outfielder in the long run

excelled against in the past. Rizzo has shown the ability to drive towering home runs out of the ballpark during batting practice.

Nolan Jones (Holy Ghost Prep, Bensalem, Pa.) is one of the better power hitters in the class, with the ability to hit home runs to the opposite field during batting practice. In Jupiter, the Virginia commit went 5-for-15 with one home run.

Outfielders

Playing for the Yankees, Kobie Taylor (Portsmouth, N.H., High) consistently made hard contact throughout the event. He has a tendency to hit the ball with topspin to his pull side. Taylor runs well for a righthanded hitter, consistently reaching first base in 4.25 seconds or slightly less. He went 6-for-17 on the week. He is committed to Vanderbilt.

Akil Baddoo (Salem High, Conyers, Ga.) showed off speed and quick hands for the Braves Scout Team. Baddoo, a Kentucky commit, has exciting athleticism. He went 5-for-17 and with two doubles and two triples.

Canes outfielders Seth Beer (Lambert High, Suwanee, Ga.) and Austin Langworthy (Williston (Fla.) High) each performed well at the plate. Langworthy, a Florida commit, is a bit smaller in stature, but he protects the plate well and has a knack for punching pitches on the outer half to the opposite field. Beer, a Clemson commit, fits the classic power corner outfield profile, with a swing that's geared up for both hard contact and some swing-and-miss, but he struck out only twice, going 7-for-16 with three doubles and three walks.



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Transactions

Transactions involving minor league players, i.e. those not on 40-man rosters, covering the period Oct. 17-30.

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS: Signed RHP **Jose Nivar**, Cs **Andy Garcia** and **Brett Hayes**, 3B **Randy Federico** and SSs **Roberto Delgado** and **Jose King**. Re-signed C **Mark Thomas**.

BALTIMORE ORIOLES: Signed LHP **Adam Kolarek**. Re-signed LHPs **Cesar Cabral** and **Ashur Tolliver** and 2B **Corban Joseph**.

BOSTON RED SOX: Signed OF **Jayce Ray**. Re-signed RHPs **Nick Green** and **Jorge Marban**. Released C **Jon Denney** and 1B **Luke Murton**.

CHICAGO CUBS: Re-signed RHP **Jose Rosario**. Released LHP **Tsuyoshi Wada**. C **Taylor Teagarden** and OF **Quintin Berry** elected free agency.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX: Signed 2B **Steve Lombardozzi**. Released OF **Jordan Yallen**.

COLORADO ROCKIES: Released RHPs **Angel Lezama** and **Cesar Villarreal**, C **Jairo Rosario**, 1B **Henry Garcia** and OF **Marcos Derkes**. RHP **Gonzalez Germen** elected free agency.

MIAMI MARLINS: Traded RHP **Trevor Williams** to Pirates for RHP **Richard Mitchell**. 2B **Donovan Solano** elected free agency.

MINNESOTA TWINS: Re-signed SS **Heiker Meneses**. Released RHPs **Josh Guxer** and **Wilfredy Liranzo** and LHP **Steven Gruver**. LHP **Aaron Thompson**, C **Eric Fryer** and OF **Shane Robinson** elected free agency.

NEW YORK YANKEES: Re-signed C **Eddy Rodriguez**. Released 1B **Kyle Roller**.

OAKLAND ATHLETICS: C **Bryan Anderson** elected free agency.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES: Released OF **Yunior Reyes**. OFs **Brian Bogue** and **Domonic Brown** elected free agency.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES: Traded RHP **Richard Mitchell** to Marlins for RHP **Trevor Williams**. RHP **Deolis Guerra** elected free agency.

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS: Signed C **Erik Garcia**. Re-signed RHPs **Jhonny Polanco** and **Gerwuins Velazco**.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS: RHP **Brett Bochy** elected free agency.

TAMPA BAY RAYS: Released RHPs **Josh Kimborowicz**, **Justin McCalvin**, **Kyle McKenzie**, **Tomas Michelson**, **Ty Nichols** and **Bradley Wallace**; C **Jovany Felipe**, 1B **Nic Wilson**, 2Bs **Oscar Sanay** and **Cody Semler**, 3B **Carter Burgess** and OF **Marty Gantt**.

TEXAS RANGERS: C **Carlos Corporan** and OF **Antoan Richardson** elected free agency.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS: Re-signed RHP **Gustavo Pierre**. 2B **Darwin Barney** elected free agency.

Obituaries

Roger Aceto, an outfielder who played two years in pro ball from 1957-58, died Oct. 23 in Des Moines. He was 78.

Robert "Beetle" Auten, a second baseman who played one year of pro ball in 1956, died Oct. 14 in Concord, N.C. He was 82.

Hubert Brooks, a righthander who pitched four years of pro ball from 1951-54, died Oct. 25 in Conway, Ark. He was 85.

Jerry Buchanan, a righthander who pitched in the minors from 1950-51 and 1954-58, died Oct. 14 in Dallas. He was 84.

Dean Chance, a righthander who was the 1964 Cy Young winner and pitched 11 years in the majors, died Oct. 11 in Wooster, Ohio. He was 74.

Chance began his pro career in the Orioles organization before landing with the expansion Los Angeles Angels before the 1961 season. Chance made his big league debut that year as a 20 year old and joined the Angels' rotation on a full-time basis in 1962, logging 206 innings with a 14-10, 2.96 mark. He blossomed in 1964, nearly winning the pitching triple crown in the American League—he led in wins (20) and ERA (1.65) and was third in strikeouts (207)—on his way to the Cy Young Award at age 23. His resume that year included 15 complete games and a league-best 11 shutouts.

Chance pitched two more years with the Angels before being traded to the Twins in December 1966. He posted his second 20-win season in his first year as a Twin, going 20-14, 2.73 while pitching a league-high 283 innings. He got to make his only appearance in the postseason in 1969, although he was hit hard in his lone appearance in the Twins' ALCS loss to the Orioles. The Twins dealt him to the Indians after the '69 season, and he bounced from Cleveland to the Mets to the Tigers over the 1970 and '71 seasons, last appearing in the majors at age 30 with Detroit in 1971. He finished his career with 128 wins and a 2.92 ERA.

Harry Gallatin, a righthander who pitched in the minors from 1949-50, died Oct. 7 in Edwardsville, Ill. He was 88.

Gallatin went on to a Hall of Fame career in the NBA, earning seven straight all-star nods as a forward for the New York Knicks from 1951-57.

Chito Garcia, an outfielder who played professionally from 1953-57, died Oct. 14 in Mexico City. He was 91.

Garcia later had a long career as a manager in the Mexican League from 1963-84.

Garry Hancock, an outfielder who played six years in the majors for the Red Sox, died Oct. 10 in Brandon, Fla. He was 61.

A member of the South Carolina team that finished runner-up at the

1975 College World Series, Hancock turned pro as the 17th overall pick by the Indians in the 1976 January secondary draft. It was the fifth time he'd been drafted. He was traded to the Red Sox in December 1977 and debuted in the majors the following year, hitting .225 in 38 games. After another year back in the minors, Hancock returned to the majors as a part-time player for the Red Sox from 1980-82, hitting a cumulative .230 over 174 at-bats. The Red Sox subsequently dealt him to the Athletics and he got his most extensive playing time in Oakland in 1983, hitting a solid .273 with eight homers in 256 at-bats. He wrapped up his pro career playing in 51 games for the A's in 1984 and batting .217.

Tim Helfrich, a third baseman who played one year professionally in 1960, died Oct. 27 in Dayton, Ohio. He was 74.

Ed Howell, a lefthander who pitched two years in the minors from 1966-67, died Oct. 14 in Sarasota, Fla. He was 70.

Bill Killinger, an outfielder who played six years of pro ball from 1950-55, died Oct. 1 in Media, Pa. He was 87.

Ronnie King, a catcher who played from 1947-50 and 1953-56, died Oct. 26 in Land Park, Calif. He was 87.

Mike Kolesar, a righthander who pitched in the minors from 1936-38 and in 1941, died Oct. 27 in Sacramento. He was 101.

Donald Lisinski, a righthander who pitched professionally from 1945-48, died Oct. 26 in Brunswick, Ga. He was 86.

John Marr, a catcher who played professionally for five years from 1954-58, died Oct. 6 in Bradenton, Fla. He was 80.

Jim Michalec, a righthander who pitched in nine years in pro ball between 1949 and 1960, died Oct. 1 in San Marcos, Texas. He was 86.

Chuck Milnes, who played one year in the minors in 1948, died Oct. 4 in Ellwood City, Pa. He was 87.

Joe Panella, an outfielder who played three years in the minors from 1963-65, died Oct. 21 in Fresno. He was 75.

Joe Rosania, an outfielder who played three years in the minors from 1956-58, died Oct. 2 in Staten Island, N.Y. He was 80.

Hal Schacker, a righthander who pitched in one season for the Boston Braves, died Oct. 2 in Tampa. He was 90.

Schacker started playing pro ball after getting out of the U.S. military and reached the majors from May-June 1945 as a 20 year old. He made six appearances, all in relief, for the Boston Braves, going 0-1, 5.28 in 15 innings.

Neill Sheridan, an outfielder who briefly played for the Red Sox in 1948, died Oct. 15 in Antioch, Calif. He was 93.

Sheridan had a 12-year career playing in the minor leagues from 1943-54. His only call to the big leagues came in September 1948, when he appeared in two games for the Red Sox, both off the bench.

Jim Seiber, an outfielder who played pro ball from 1949-50, died Oct. 3 in Maryville, Tenn. He was 87.

Norm Siebern, a first baseman who played 12 years in the majors between 1956 and 1968, died Oct. 30 in Naples, Fla. He was 82.

Siebern made a splash in his first full season in the majors in 1958, hitting .300 with 14 homers in 460 at-bats and winning a Gold Glove—and a World Series—as the Yankees' regular left fielder. Siebern played one more season in New York before being traded to the Kansas City Athletics as part of the deal that brought Roger Maris to the Bronx.

Siebern made three straight all-star games for the A's and Orioles from 1962-64, hitting his peak in 1962 when he hit .308 with a career-high 25 homers and 117 RBIs. However, he never broke double digits in homers again

after 1964, moving between the Orioles, Angels, Giants and Red Sox from 1965-68. He closed out his career with a .272 lifetime average and 132 homers.

Sonny Spradlin, a catcher who played one year of pro ball in 1953, died Oct. 17 in Kilgore, Texas. He was 85.

Fred Storck, an outfielder who played pro ball from 1946-50 and 1953-56, died Oct. 4 in Muskegon, Mich. He was 87.

Larry Tokarchik, a righthander who pitched one year of pro ball in 1949, died Oct. 31 in Vestal, N.Y. He was 85.

John Tsitouris, a righthander who pitched 11 years in the majors from 1957-68, died Oct. 22 in Monroe, N.C. He was 79.

Tsitouris had brief call-ups over the course of the 1957-60 seasons with the Tigers and Athletics. After spending all of 1961 and most of '62 back in the minors, Tsitouris finally got his first full season in the big leagues with the Reds in 1963, going 12-8, 3.16 over 191 innings, setting career highs for both wins and innings. He remained a regular member of the Reds' rotation in 1964 and 1965, winning nine and six games, respectively, before going back to the minors in 1966. He made just six big league appearances over the 1966-68 seasons, ending his career with 34 wins and a 4.13 ERA in the majors.

Bill Wallace, a righthander who pitched three years in the minors between 1950 and 1954, died Oct. 12 in Wyoming, Del. He was 85.

John Willis, a righthander who pitched two years in pro ball from 1977-78, died Oct. 6 in Hampton, Va. He was 56.

Bob Wortman, a catcher who played three years professionally from 1950-52, died Oct. 20 in Findlay, Ohio. He was 87.

Obituary information provided by SABR. Information for minor league obituaries may be emailed to BaseballNecrology@gmail.com.



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Kansas City's comeback kids win World Series with style



Jayson Stark

Baseball Analyst,
Senior Writer
ESPN.com

NEW YORK

They should have been thinking about the long flight back to Kansas City for Game Six. They should have been thinking they'd just run into Matt Harvey on the wrong night in November. They should have been thinking that some missions are more impossible than others, and this was one of them.

But those are the kinds of thoughts other teams think. Not this team. Not the team that just won the 2015 World Series on a shocking Sunday night at Citi Field, the Kansas City Royals.

If there ever was a team that could find itself two runs down to the Dark Knight in the ninth inning of a World Series game and think, "Cool, we've got these guys right where we want them," this was that team—the kings of improbability. They'd spent an entire postseason acting as if down were up.

Maybe that's why their general manager, Dayton Moore, turned to one of his special assistants, Jason Kendall, as the ninth inning was about to begin in Game Five and uttered these unlikely words:

"Get ready. We're about to find a way to win the World Series."

Wait. Really? Who could possibly have felt the earthquake in this park as Harvey sprinted to the mound, trying to finish off the first complete-game shutout in a potential World Series elimination game since Curt Schilling in 1993, and thought to himself, "Yeah, we're good."

Only a GM who had seen one postseason miracle after another unfold before his eyes, and knew he had a dugout full of guys who couldn't wait to spring another one. That's who.

"I just had a feeling," Moore found himself saying many hours later, after the stunning 7-2, 12-inning ambush of the New York Mets that carried the Royals to the pinnacle of their sport. "I don't usually make those predictions. But I just had a feeling."

Contagious Enthusiasm

OK, now here's the really crazy part: He wasn't alone.

The moment Lorenzo Cain ground his way through a seven-pitch at-bat to work a leadoff walk against Harvey to start the ninth, Royals legend George Brett sat in those same stands and said: "I've seen this movie before."

Chris Young found himself saying: "Here we go again." And the Royals' dugout surged with adrenaline, as the men about to head for home plate told one another emphatically: "We're down to our last at-bats. Make them count."

Then off they went, to finish off their fantastic journey with one final amazing trick that would even make Penn & Teller



"Once we tied it, I said 'We've got this one,'" Royals manager Ned Yost said of Eric Hosmer's Game Five dash. Yost wasn't alone

ask: "How the heck did they do that?"

What followed was actually just the latest, greatest summation of who they are.

So of course Eric Hosmer would charge home with the tying run on a routine ground ball to third base. And of course the guy who would eventually single in the winning run in the 12th inning, backup infielder Christian Colon, was a fellow who hadn't even made it into the batter's box in four weeks. And of course, this team would somehow go on to score seven runs on a night when you would have bet heavily against it even scoring one. And they've been pretty much willing themselves to do that for weeks now.

"If that game doesn't epitomize what our club is all about," Young said, "then I don't know what does."

How Do They Do It?

How unlikely were these games they kept conjuring up ways to win? Let's sum that up for you:

■ The Royals won 11 games in this postseason. In seven of them, they trailed by at least two runs at some point, then roared back to win. No team had ever done that.

■ And in six of those 11 wins, the Royals were losing heading into the sixth inning. No team had ever won six games that way in a single postseason, either.

■ And just in this World Series, the Royals not only trailed

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Before Daniel Murphy did it in the NLCS, only four lefthanded hitters homered off Cubs' ace Jon Lester during the 2015 season. Can you name them?

» **HITTING THE RECORD BOOKS:** It's a good thing for **Dayton Moore** he didn't know that only two other teams in the history of baseball had ever won the World Series the way the Royals did—by finding themselves at least two runs behind in the ninth inning or later of a clinching game and then scrambling back to win. And don't go looking for any YouTube highlights of the previous two—because they happened in 1929 (A's) and 1939 (Yankees).

TRIVIALITY ANSWER: Bryce Harper, Carlos Gonzalez, Lucas Duda and . . . Tigers pitcher Daniel Norris.

in all five games but won three games in which they trailed in the eighth inning or later. No team had ever done that before in any of the first 110 World Series in history.

"Once we tied it, I said, 'We've got this game,'" Yost said of Hosmer's Game Five dash home, "just because our bullpen is so good. So really, after we tied it, I felt totally relaxed. I even said, 'My heart should be beating faster than it is.'"

A year ago, the journey of the Royals didn't end this way. That journey ended with one more meeting with that Madison Bumgarner guy. And as the Giants celebrated, the Royals filed the sting of that loss under "Unfinished Business."

"The way it ended last year, with everything that happened, such a magical run, you knew it couldn't end like that again," Hosmer said. "You knew that story had to have a way better ending than losing Game Seven."

But to rewrite that ending, the Royals had to do something that no American League team had done since the 1961 Yankees: Lose Game Seven one year, then win the World Series the next year.

This one wasn't just for the team. This one was for the people of Kansas City, who spent 30 years waiting for a night like this to arrive. Sixteen teams won a World Series in all those years when the Royals weren't winning one. The Red Sox won for the first time in 86 years. The White Sox won for the first time in 88 years. The Phillies became the first team from their town, in a quarter-century, to win a title in any of the four major professional sports. But in Kansas City, the wait went on. Until this group arrived.

"I thought a lot about that," Moore said. "And I said, 'Gosh dang, if we don't break this 30-year drought now, we never will.' It's funny how your mind starts going down that trail."

"But you know what? We don't have to go down that trail anymore."

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